

**The Role of Proactive Behaviors in the Organizational Socialization of  
K-12 Principals: A Sequential Mixed Methods Design**

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**The Role of Proactive Behaviors in the Organizational Socialization of K-12 Principals:  
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## **Abstract**

A new employee being successfully socialized into the organization and their role in particular is associated with overall individual and organizational success. Moreover, newcomer proactivity is a critical component of the organizational socialization process as individual socialization tactics can contribute to increased newcomer learning. The process of principals being effectively socialized into the role is worthy of investigation since there is ample empirical evidence, which supports how essential the principal is in facilitating school improvement. However, the organizational socialization of principals is an underrepresented topic in the literature.

This mixed methods study examined the proactive role principals play in facilitating their own organizational socialization. Phase I of the research utilized data collected from two quantitative questionnaires designed to elicit the information seeking behaviors of K-12 principals as well as how they perceived the information they obtained to enhance their overall knowledge base. Phase II of the study used interview data which provided insight into the other proactive behaviors principals utilized as well as how they made sense of their individual socialization experiences. Furthermore, a never before tested four theory framework was employed as the study's conceptual foundation in order to determine if (The Need to Belong, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Social Identity Theory) serve as an accurate theoretical foundation for the organizational socialization experiences of K-12 principals.

Findings showed principals play an active role in their socialization, which is motivated by great amounts of uncertainty and a need to belong. Moreover, they utilize multiple forms of proactive behaviors such as information seeking and inquiry,

relationship building, and feedback seeking through engaging in social exchanges in an effort to fashion a positive social identity within the organization.

*Keywords:* organizational socialization, proactive behaviors, newcomer learning, principals, uncertainty reduction theory, need to belong, social exchange theory, social identity theory

## **Dedication**

To my wife, Caitlin, and our son, Sawyer. To my parents, Thomas and Gail,  
and to  
my siblings, Alexandra and Todd.

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## **Chapter I: INTRODUCTION**

Organizational socialization is generally considered an offshoot of adult socialization (Chaoi, 2012; Van Maanen, 1978). Van Maanen (1978) explicates the purpose of socialization of any kind is to provide an individual with the knowledge, ability, and motivation to take on a defined role. Moreover, Schein (1971) posits individuals construct multiple social selves allowing them to fulfill various role expectations. Although the construct of organizational socialization has undergone much evolution since its genesis, it will be defined here as, “A learning or adjustment process that enables an individual to assume an organizational role that fits both organizational and individual needs” (Chaoi, 2012, p. 582). Early socialization experiences have been linked to overall long-term adjustment (Hall, 1980). Furthermore, positive organizational socialization experiences have been connected to increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment as well as increased performance and role innovation. Whereas negative socialization experiences have been connected to role ambiguity and conflict, disillusionment and turnover (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007).

Early studies of organizational socialization concentrated on two ways in which one might be socialized into an organization (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Chaoi, 2012). Stage models (Feldman, 1976, 1981; Wanous, 1992) of newcomer socialization saw it as a linear process, whereby the neophyte would progress through a series of stages on their way to achieving insidership. The other focus in the early literature was on organizational socialization tactics, which describe how an organization can facilitate one’s socialization in accordance with the organization’s culture (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Jones 1986).

Later the research began to investigate a third avenue of organizational socialization, namely, the individuals's role in their own adjustment. Many researchers (Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Reichers, 1987) have examined how the level and type of newcomer proactivity influence one's socialization experiences. Although there is no universally excepted classification of individual socialization tactics, a plethora of proactive behaviors have been put forth in the literature including: information seeking, feedback seeking, monitoring, inquiry, and experimentation (Ashford & Black, 1996; Chaoi, 2012; Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski 1992; Saks, Gruman, & Cooper-Thomas, 2011). The present study will utilize Cooper-Thomas and Burke's (2012) description of proactive behaviors as: preemptive and self-initiated with the purpose of changing a newcomer's role or environment to better fit the person, assist the newcomer to adapt to the organization, or facilitate the mutual development of both parties.

Newcomer learning is a critical component of the newcomer socialization process and has been linked to both proximal and distal socialization outcomes (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002). Organizational learning during the socialization process encompasses the job and role, interpersonal and group relationships, and the nature of the organization as a whole (Bauer & Erdogan, 2012). Furthermore, research shows that individual proactivity is more related to learning than organizational tactics (Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007; Atzori, Lombardi, Fraccoroli, Battistelli, & Zaniboni, 2008). Moreover, employee learning as an outcome of individual socialization tactics has been found to be related to a variety of socialization and adjustment variables such as: job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Cooper

Thomas & Anderson, 2002), role clarity (Chan & Schmitt, 2000; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), task mastery (Chan & Schmitt, 2000), and identity resolution (Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994) to name a few.

There is no doubt that the principal is seen as the facilitator of educational improvement within a school. Their leadership is pivotal in improving the school’s quality of teaching and learning and growing a culture that places student achievement and well being above all else (Marks & Printy, 2003; Robison, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Therefore, it seems the successful socialization of a principal into their role is of immense importance. However, most organizational socialization research to date involves new entry-level employees breaking into an organization (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007). Only a sparse number of socialization studies have focused on the socialization process of leaders (Sakks & Ashfort, 1997), and an even smaller number have focused specifically on the principal socialization process (Crowe, 2006; Heck, 1995), even though socialization needs are among the most concentrated during a hierarchical boundary crossing (Schein, 1968).

The present study utilized a sequential mixed method design to investigate how K-12 principals’ use of proactive behaviors contributes to their overall organizational socialization. Two quantitative questionnaires were sent to a random sample of K-12 school leaders. These surveys provided insight into the information acquisition patterns and perceived learning of the sample. Next, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of the quantitative sample in order to understand how K-12 principals experience and make sense of their own organizational socialization. Integrated meta-inferences (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) were used in conjunction with four theories, two

need theories and two from social psychology, to develop a conceptual framework in which to understand the organizational socialization process of K-12 principals.

## **Problem**

The demand for employment of K-12 principals will grow six percent nationwide by the year 2022 (NASSP, 2017). However, the turnover rate for school principals is among the highest of any industry in the United States, with 50% not making it past their third year on the job and less than 30% staying beyond five years (Briggs, Rhines Cheney, Davis, & Moll, 2013). A combination of rising demand and a high turnover rate has posed a significant financial burden on districts in terms of what it costs to recruit, hire, prepare, and provide support to their principals (NASSP, 2017; School Leaders Network, 2014).

There is no doubt that having a strong and committed school leader in place is essential in any school improvement effort (Lytle, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; May & Supovitz, 2011; Robinson, et al., 2008). In fact, some researchers claim that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning (Seashore-Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). However, many school leaders are not getting the support necessary to handle the complexity of the role (School Leaders Network, 2014).

As principals engage in the challenge to bring about great change in the culture and norms of teaching, they need to maintain disciplined attention to see the change through (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001). However, seeing transformational change through requires a stable presence by the same leader over multiple years (School Leaders Network, 2014). Although the most effective principals can stimulate momentous



changes within a year, it takes an average of five years to steward an impactful vision, facilitate instructional improvement, and fully implement other necessary policies and practices to improve student achievement (Horng, Lai, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010).

A recent survey of nearly 500 principals found about one in every three school leaders in the sample was actively considering leaving the profession (MetLife, 2012). Yet research on the organizational socialization of K-12 principals has been scant (Heck, 1995; Stevenson, 2006; Steyn, 2013). Many scholars point to a need for further research on how principals adapt to and make sense of their roles, especially in light of the recent changes to the structure and demands of the job (Cline & Nechochea, 2000; Crowe, 2006; Elmore, 2000; Normore, 2004; Spillane, Harris, Jones, & Mertz, 2015; Spillane & Lee, 2014). Crow (2006) postulates the attention in the United States on improving principals' socialization, has mostly resulted in a disconnected collection of strategies, which fail to generate any real understanding of the construct. Other scholars have noted that principal socialization is an isolated process (Hart, 1991) in which many principals struggle to develop a positive role identity (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

It is apparent that there is a pragmatic need to gain a better understanding of how successful school principals experienced their organizational socialization into the role. An in depth understanding of these experiences as well as how exemplary principals made sense of them is an evident requisite as researchers and school district personnel attempt to find ways to help principals be more successful in the role as well as serve for longer tenures than is currently the case nationally. Moreover, socialization literature as a whole has been criticized for its inconsistent use of theory, as there is no universally

accepted theory that frames the process (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison 2007; Chaoi, 2012). Thus there is a gap in the research body, as no current theoretically grounded model exists for how present day principals experience and make sense of their organizational socialization into the role.

## **Purpose**

The school principal is the instructional and cultural heartbeat of the school. Their leadership has the potential to curry tremendous influence over the success of the school, especially if they are in the role long enough to establish themselves as a stable presence (Horng, et al., 2010; School Leaders Network, 2014; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). In light of these facts the purpose of this study was to explore the proactive role K-12 principals take in regards to their organizational socialization. In particular this study examined how and from whom principals seek information about their job tasks, role, work group, or the organization.

Additionally, this study sought to ascertain whether a four-theory framework for organizational socialization (The Need to Belong, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Social Identity Theory) originally proposed by Chaoi (2012) is an accurate theoretical foundation for the organizational socialization experiences of K-12 principals. Finally, the study aimed to elicit an understanding of the overall proactive role principals take in their own socialization, in addition to their information seeking habits, in order to develop an accurate conceptual model of the process, which will contribute to gaining an overall understanding of how effective K-12 principals perceive and make sense of the process of organizational socialization.

The findings from this study have the potential to be useful to district personnel

looking for ways to support principals as they adjust to and make sense of their new role. The high turnover and attrition rate of school principals has posed a major financial burden on districts. Conservative estimates have shown that it costs around \$75,000 to socialize each new principal, which equates to about \$330,000 annually for a typical urban district (School Leaders Network, 2014). District leaders may also be interested in the instructional impact that the successful socialization and retention of a school principal can provide as replacing a principal is a disruptive event and leads to organizational instability (Lytle, 2012). Although highly effective principals can stimulate change in the short term, it takes multiple years for the school leader's vision to be fully realized and the benefits reaped (Horng, et al., 2010; School Leaders Network, 2014; Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). However, given an ample amount of time a strong leader can have a positive systemic effect on the overall instructional and cultural direction of the school (Leithwood, Louis-Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Additionally, research in this area serves to add to the existing knowledge base on the individual's role in the organizational socialization process, particularly in the context of principal socialization. As noted above the principal socialization literature is scarce and most of the extant literature was published prior to the current demands of the role (Cline & Nechochea, 2000; Crowe, 2006; Elmore, 2000; Normore, 2004). Furthermore, most recent studies of principal socialization have examined this phenomenon through an organizational rather than individual lens (Bengston, Zepeda, & Parylo, 2013; Normore, 2004; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005). Of the few modern examinations of the principal socialization process that attempt to understand how principals adjust to and make sense

of their complex roles from an individual perspective (Brown-Ferrigno, 2003; Spillane & Lee, 2014; Spillane, et al., 2015), none have directly focused on how a principals utilization of proactive behaviors influences this process.

### **Role of Theory**

Theory is an important component used in both exploratory and confirmatory research. Neuman (2006) defines theory in social research, “as a system of interconnected ideas that condenses and organizes knowledge about the social world” (p. 50). Theory must be grounded in evidence, and aim to maintain a high level of logical consistency. However, theories are open ended and therefore constantly evolving. Theory frames how we view a topic. It enables us to connect a single study to an immense base of knowledge, which is constantly being contributed to (Neuman, 2006).

Many theories make propositions about the relationship and connections between various concepts within a theory. In confirmatory research a hypothesis is developed to test the accuracy of these relationships in the empirical world. If the hypothesis is confirmed after repeated evaluations in many different settings, it gains credibility and generalizability (Neuman, 2006). Confirmatory research utilizes theory in a deductive manner. The researcher begins the data collecting process only after familiarizing themselves with the theoretical propositions related to their topic of study. They seek to gather empirical evidence to prove or disprove these concepts based on their data and sample (Neuman, 2006).

Theory plays a different, but equally crucial role in exploratory research. In this type of research the researchers uses theory in an inductive manner. They begin by observing the empirical world, and then reflect upon and analyze what’s taking place.

Their thinking becomes more and more abstract which leads them into developing theoretical propositions. Exploratory research is used to build theory rather than confirm it (Neuman, 2006).

The topic of one's study will determine the role theory plays in their research. However, regardless if theory is used in an inductive or deductive sense its principle purpose is to explain (Neuman, 2006). Neuman (2006) defines a theoretical explanation as, "a logical argument that tells why something takes a specific form or occurs, and does so by referring to more general ideas or abstract principles" (p. 62).

Theory plays an imperative role in the present study. In general, a deductive conceptual framework drove the study. However, theory was also used in an inductive manner in the sense that a micro theory specific to the organizational socialization of K-12 principals was constructed from a more macro-set of theoretical constructs and propositions that have been more broadly applied to organizational socialization in general.

Specifically, four theories, two need theories and two from social psychology, formed the theoretical framework under which the study was conducted. It should also be noted that although all four theories utilized in the study have been employed in a unitary fashion or in some combination in other studies of organizational socialization (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Louis, 1980; Grodzki, 2011; Reichers, 1987) no study to date has utilized all four simultaneously (Chaoi, personal communication, November 20, 2017). Moreover, although this framework was never applied to an empirical study until now, it was first suggested by Chaoi (2012) as a potential unifying theoretical model of the organizational socialization process.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) posits that individuals have a need to reduce uncertainty, or increase the predictability of behaviors. During the organizational socialization process new employees face considerable uncertainty (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison; Ashforth, Sluss & Saks, 2007; Morrison, 1993) and URT identifies this uncertainty as a catalyst for an individual's proactive socialization behaviors (Chaoi, 2012). The anxiety associated with uncertainty (Berger, 1979) serves as motivation to reduce it (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012).

The need to belong to a group and have positive interpersonal relationships is found in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). Hornsey and Jetten, (2004) posit people have a need to belong to social groups. Moreover, group identities can be fundamental to a person's self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It is hypothesized that as a fundamental motivation, the need to belong should stimulate goal-directed activity designed to satisfy it (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

The main proposition of Social Exchange Theory (SET) is that people socially interact with others because they stand to gain some reward for doing so. In turn, the other actor must also gain some reward from the exchange. This process serves to create interdependent relationships. Furthermore, if an interaction does not provide one with a reward, or the reward doesn't match (equity) or exceed your cost (profit), one is likely to end it (Redmond, 2015b). As positive relationships between newcomers and organizations develop, the exchanges are likely to become more predictable, resulting in uncertainty reduction, as well as providing a stimulus to allow individuals to form organizational identities and derive meaning from their jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is based on the construct of self-categories or mental groupings of a person's perception of him or herself (Chaoi, 2012). Self-categories that are unique from those of others are called personal identities, whereas shared similarities with groups of people are termed social identities (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). Within the organizational environment the frequency of social categories suggests that social identities are likely to represent a significant component of individuals' organizationally situated self-definition (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Therefore for many people their professional and/or organizational identity may be more prevalent and important than ascribed identities based on gender, age, ethnicity, race, or nationality (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Additionally, Ashforth and Mael (1989) explain that newcomers are concerned with building a self-definition, of which the social identity makes up a large part. Social identities emerge as a part of a natural process of self-definition, motivated by the need to reduce uncertainty and enhance self-esteem (Hogg & Terry, 2001).

According to Chaoi (2012), two need theories, uncertainty reduction and the need to belong, explicate why individuals attempt to fit into their new role. Subsequently, two theories from social psychology, social identity theory and social exchange theory, can be used to explain the process an individual undertakes in making sense of their new role and how they develop a situated social identity related to it. The aforementioned four-theory framework served as the overall conceptual model of the study.

Additionally, the researcher utilized a dialectic pragmatic worldview (Johnson & Gray, 2010) within a sequential mixed methods design to serve as a framework for the overall research design. Essentially this worldview combines Greene's (2007) dialectical

mixed methods approach and philosophical pragmatism (Johnson & Gray, 2010). It functions as a meta-paradigm able to provide a meta-ontological, meta-epistemological, and a meta-ethical perspective (Johnson, 2012).

## **Research Questions**

The present study embodies both confirmatory and exploratory aspects, thus the corresponding research questions were constructed to investigate divergent aspects of the organizational socialization of K-12 principals. The overarching research questions are general in nature. They subsume the preceding questions as a means to provide a framework for a general inquiry of the phenomenon under study.

The quantitative research questions are confirmatory in nature. The first three questions seek to elicit the information acquisition patterns of principals in terms of the sources and domains utilized as principals gather the necessary information to adjust to their roles. The fourth research question is also confirmatory in nature. It seeks to understand which contextual domains principals perceive to have learned the most in, as well as how this domain specific learning contributes to their overall sense of knowledge in the role. The qualitative research question is exploratory in nature and seeks to ascertain the degree of proactivity principals elicit in the organizational socialization process as well as their perceptions of their individual socialization experiences.

Overarching:

1. How do K-12 principals perceive and make sense of the process of organizational socialization?
2. Does The Need to Belong, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Social Identity Theory serve as an accurate theoretical foundation for the organizational socialization of K-12 principals?



Quantitative:

1. Is there a difference in principal information acquisition among different organizational sources?
2. Is there a difference in principal information acquisition within contextual domains?
3. Does contextual domain have an influence on which sources principals use to acquire information?
4. Which types of domain specific learning contribute the most to a K-12 principal's overall sense of knowledge?

Qualitative:

1. What role do K-12 principals play in their organizational socialization?

### **Significance of Study**

This study was significant for the following reasons. First, it utilized a never before empirically tested theoretical framework for organizational socialization (Chaoi, 2012). This is notable since the socialization literature has been criticized for a lack of a unified theory (Ashford, & Nurmohamed, 2012; Chaoi, 2012). Next, the findings from this study illuminated the particular proactive behaviors principals utilized as well as how they used them to adjust to the voluminous responsibilities of the role. This is significant as the organizational socialization of K-12 principals is an under represented topic in the literature (Heck, 1995; Stevenson, 2006; Steyn, 2013) with this being the first study to explicitly examine the proactive behaviors of school leaders.

Furthermore, the results of the study were analyzed within the proposed theoretical framework (The Need to Belong, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Social Identity Theory), which resulted in the development of a conceptual model of the principal individual socialization process. This is significant as no such model of the principal socialization process existed prior to this study.

Finally, the findings from this study should be useful to district personnel looking for ways to support principals as they adjust to and make sense of their new role. This is especially important in light of the fact that principal turnover is on the rise and proving to be impactful both financially and instructionally in many districts around the country (NASSP, 2017; School Leaders Network, 2014).

### **Definition of terms**

The following operational definitions will be utilized for the purposes of this Study:

- (a) Organizational Socialization- A learning and adjustment process that enables an individual to assume an organizational role that fits both organizational and individual needs (Chao, 2012, p.582).
- (b) Proactive Behaviors-Behaviors that can change a newcomer's role or environment to better fit the person, can change the newcomer to adapt to the organization, or can result in the mutual development of both parties (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012).
- (c) Mentor-someone at an equivalent or higher level than you who has helped you by taking you "under their wing." They could have done so in a formal or informal capacity (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).
- (d) Supervisor-One's immediate supervisor or boss.

- (e) Co-worker-a member of your work group or other employee at your level or lower (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).
- (f) Watching- learning by observing how others do things (Ostroff & Kozlowski's, 1992).
- (g) Trying- trial and error, or experimenting in the role (Ostroff & Kozlowski's, 1992).
- (h) Manual-learning from a manual about policies, procedures, jobs, etc. or learning from formal orientation/training (Ostroff & Kozlowski's, 1992).
- (i) Inquiry-directly asking another person in the organization for information (Ashford & Cummings, 1983).

## **Chapter II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Adult Socialization**

Adult socialization began to gain prominence as a field of interest in the 1960s and 70s (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978). As knowledge of adult socialization began to emerge during the aforementioned decades, the previously widely held belief that most significant socialization experiences occurred in childhood began to be questioned (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978). Two major themes were prominent in the early adult socialization literature; the first being the degree of consistency maintained in one's personality as they transition among different social groups and roles (Brim, 1968). While there is not universal consistency in the literature as to the degree of personality change throughout one's life, there is ample empirical evidence which suggests that the degree of individual change is determined by the amount of change in social situations, role demands, and challenges encountered throughout life (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978). The second major theme in the early adult socialization literature is concerned with the difference between childhood and adult socialization in terms of content, context and response (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978).

Child socialization is generally viewed as primary, with a major emphasis on personality development, whereas adult socialization is primarily viewed as secondary, with a major emphasis on social identities (Chaoi, 2012). A child generally has less power than his or her adult socializer(s) and is situated in an explicit position as a learner. Contrariwise, an adult may have equal or comparable power with his or her socializer(s) and may resist the dynamic of being positioned as a learner or in some other deferential role. Children usually have little to no choice over their socialization environment

whereas adults are more able to influence or leave specific groups. Finally, children are generally quite flexible during the socialization process. Contrarily, adults draw upon a wide array of previous roles that influence the socialization process (Chaoi, 2012; Mortimer & Simmons, 1978).

Van Maanen (1976) postulates the major factor at all levels of socialization is, “taking the role of other and attempting to determine what the other’s response will be toward one’s own behavior” (p. 70). Thus to Van Maanen (1976) the purpose of socialization of any kind is to provide an individual with the knowledge, ability, and motivation to take on a defined role. Relatedly, Schein (1971) posited a conception of the individual as an integrated set of social selves organized around a foundational conception of self. Using this premise Schein (1971) felt individuals construct multiple social selves allowing them to fulfill various role expectations. Additionally, Clausen (1968) explicates socialization as a two-fold process that involves not only the individual, but also the group.

### **Genesis of Organizational Socialization**

The construct of organizational socialization did not appear in the literature until the 1960s (Chaoi, 2012). For most people organizational socialization is a type of adult socialization that involves secondary socialization content and processes (Chaoi, 2012; Van Maanen, 1978). Moreover, organizational socialization is a continuous process that takes place throughout one’s career stages (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Van Maanen, 1978). Organizational socialization has bore many definitions since its inception (Chaoi, 2012). For the purposes of this study the following operational definition of organizational socialization will be utilized: “A learning or adjustment

process that enables an individual to assume an organizational role that fits both organizational and individual needs” (Chaoi, 2012, p. 582). Chaoi (2012) points out that this definition coalesces with Schein’s (1968) proposition that socialization needs are intensified when an individual crosses three types of organizational boundaries: (a) hierarchical, where one shifts in ranks; (b) functional, where one performs a different function within the organization; and (c) inclusionary, where the centrality of one’s position in relation to others changes.

Early discussions of organizational socialization were centered on two basic themes (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Chaoi, 2012). First, stage models of the socialization process delineate how an organizational newcomer traverses the socialization process and eventually becomes an accepted member of the organization, otherwise known as an organizational insider. Second, organizational socialization tactics describe how an organization can design socialization experiences in order to aid newcomers in their adjustment to organizational beliefs, norms, and values.

### **Stage Models**

Several stage models have been proposed to describe the individual adjustment process during organizational socialization (Feldman, 1976, 1981; Wanous, 1992). Stage models are linear in that each stage is based on more or less successfully resolving the challenges of the previous stages (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007). Although labels for the stages vary, all of these models typically disaggregate the process into three distinct phases (Chaoi, 2012).

For simplicity and clarity Feldman’s (1976) labels and descriptions will be used. Stage one, anticipatory socialization, typically begins before the individual enters the new

role. The individual's prior knowledge and experience serve to formulate their expectations and conceptions of the new role. Feldman (1976) described two process variables in this stage: realism, which addresses the accuracy of the information accumulated by the individual and congruence, which addresses the fit between the individual's needs and the organization's resources. When an individual takes on a new role the expectations formed during the anticipatory stage are tested. How the individual adapts to the realities of the new role leads in to the next phase of the model.

Feldman (1976) labeled phase two of his model the accommodation stage. It is in this stage that the individual undergoes a process of learning and adjustment in relation to the new role. Feldman (1981) describes three process variables related to the accommodation stage: initiation to the task, or learning how master new work tasks; initiation to the group, or building positive personal relationships; and role definition, or learning one's role within the organization. Feldman (1981) discusses two other variables during the accommodation phase, but they will not be discussed here due to their lack of generalizability to all organizational newcomers (Chaoi, 2012).

Organizational socialization during the accommodation stage has generally been linked to two proximal outcomes of organizational socialization: to increase one's sense of belonging and the need to reduce uncertainty (Chaoi, 2012).

The last stage in Feldman's (1976) model, role management, focuses on the learning and adjustment required to be a fully accepted organizational member. Learning in this stage adds depth and clarity to learning in the previous stages. A deep level of understanding of the organization and work role is acquired. This stage is associated

with more distal outcomes of organizational socialization such as job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Chaoi, 2012).

Stage models have not garnered serious research attention over the past twenty to thirty years most likely due to their mixed empirical support, and history of criticism (Ashforth, Sluss & Harrison, 2007). The initial models tend to depict socialization as a linear sequence (Wanous, 1992), however, Louis (1980) criticized these models for failing to realize how old socialization learning and experiences may need to be recycled in order to accommodate new lessons. Furthermore, Morrison (1993) was critical of such models explaining they neglect to account for the proactive role that newcomers may take in facilitating the socialization process. Others have been critical of stage models for focusing too much on organizational socialization content rather than the process of organizational socialization (Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998). Finally, Fisher (1986) has been extremely critical of socialization stage models as he contends that there is no empirical research to support a universal stage model for all jobs, people, or organization types.

### **Organizational Socialization Tactics**

A second prominent theme that emerged early in the organizational socialization literature concerned the tactics or processes employed by an organization to facilitate the socialization of a newcomer into organizational life. Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) seminal theory of organizational socialization focuses on specific organizational tactics and processes that influence the socialization of new members. The theory examines six dimensions of common organizational socialization tactics that organizations utilize, either consciously or unconsciously. The six dimensions are: 1) collective vs. individual,



which describes whether individuals are socialized in groups or independently; 2) formal vs. informal, which involves the extent to which newcomers are distinguished and segregated from other organizational members. Formal tactics would include things like probationary trial periods whereas informal methods would make few distinctions between new and old members; 3) sequential vs. random examines the extent to which a distinct sequence of hurdles must be passed before becoming an official organizational member (ex. tests or training periods). A random tactic would mean no sequence exists or that it is unknown by the employee; 4) fixed vs. variable is concerned with socialization time periods. In a fixed organizational setting there exists a maximum time period for the socialization process where a variable environment would subscribe to no such time table; 5) serial vs. disjunctive refers to the existence or absence of role models or mentors. A serial tactic would be to provide new employees with role models or a formal mentor. Conversely, a disjunctive tactic would be to allow the employee to sink or swim on their own; and 6) investiture vs. divestiture refers to the extent to which a new employee's past identity is valued. An investiture tactic would affirm a newcomer's prior knowledge, skill, and identity whereas a divestiture organizational tactic would seek to strip the newcomer of these past characteristics in order to mold them to fit the organizations values and beliefs.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) hypothesized that certain combinations of tactics would lead to one of three role responses. More specifically, they theorized that sequential, variable, serial, and divestiture tactics would lead to a custodial role orientation, in which the newcomer assumes the status quo of the organizational role. Contrarily, they predicted a collective, formal, random, fixed, and disjunctive

combination would most likely lead to a content innovation role orientation in which the newcomer makes changes or improvements to the role. Finally, they thought an individual, formal, random, disjunctive, investiture combination would lead to the more extreme role innovation response, where changes are made to the role's purpose. Jones (1986) added to the theory in contending that the collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investiture tactics form a group that he termed institutionalized socialization tactics wherein the organization is very active in the socialization process. Jones (1986) described the opposite set of tactics (i.e. individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture) as individualized socialization tactics wherein the newcomer is left on his or her own and receives little support from the organization during the socialization period.

### **Individual Socialization**

There is no universally accepted taxonomy of socialization tactics utilized by the individual rather than at the organizational level, however there is clear evidence pointing to the significance of newcomer proactivity during the organizational socialization process (Morrison, 1993, Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, Reichers, 1987). Proactive behaviors are described by Cooper-Thomas & Burke (2012) as preemptive and self-initiated with the purpose of changing a newcomer's role or environment to better fit the person, assist the newcomer to adapt to the organization, or facilitate the mutual development of both parties. Reichers (1987) connects organizational research on newcomer proactivity with symbolic interactionism, asserting that organizational neophytes are actively involved in constructing meaning regarding organizational events and practices, and establishing an organizational identity through interactions and

exchanges with organizational insiders. Others have similarly suggested that individuals are not passive recipients of socialization, but active participants in the process (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Ashforth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007).

The primary way in which newcomers gain knowledge about their roles is by engaging in proactive behaviors (Morrison, 1993). A number of different proactive behaviors have received attention in the literature, including information seeking about one's job, role, work group, and the organization, feedback-seeking in regards to one's work performance, general socializing, networking, relationship building, and job change negotiation, which refers to attempts to change or modify one's tasks or role (Saks, Gruman, & Cooper-Thomas, 2011).

Chaoi, (2012) posits five general individual socialization tactics, or proactive behaviors, that contribute to one's organizational socialization: monitoring, inquiry, written and electronic sources, job changes, and social influence. Monitoring refers to attending to one's environment through observation. One may monitor supervisors, coworkers, subordinates, and others involved with the organization. Monitoring can provide information in regard to one's role, organizational structures, and social dynamics (Chaoi, 2012). Research has found that newcomers relied on monitoring more than other methods of information acquisition (Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Moreover, Morrison (1993) found monitoring positively related to satisfaction and performance.

Inquiry tactics involve direct interactions with others for the solicitation of information (Chaoi, 2012). Studies on information seeking in organizations have largely

identified support staff, other newcomers, peers, senior coworkers, supervisors, and mentors as targets for inquiry (Lois, Posner & Powell, 1983).

Written or electronic sources include manuals, memos, and employee handbooks. Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) found newcomers did not acquire much information from manuals. Moreover, Morrison (1993) found that newcomers did not rely on memos or other written materials for acquiring information as much as they did for monitoring or inquiry. However, the research on written sources is limited and there is none on how social media mediums affect organizational socialization (Chaoi, 2012).

Chaoi (2012) defines job changes as, “a proactive behavior focused on changing the conditions of the job or role (p. 597). Similarly, Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) describe trying as an information acquisition tactic in which a newcomer learns through trial and error or through experimenting with different behaviors. Reactions to these behaviors can reduce uncertainty and leave the newcomer with a better sense of what is valued within the organization (Chaoi, 2012). Saks and Ashforth (1996) examined proactive socialization tactics. One aspect of their study looked at self-goal setting, which can be viewed as a type of experimentation. The authors found self-set goals were positively related to ability to cope and negatively related to anxiety and stress. Additionally, direct negotiation with others can help newcomers change job expectations and job changes has been found to be positively related to role clarity (Saks et al., 2011).

Social influence tactics are proactive behaviors focused on building relationships with others. Fang, Duffy, and Shaw (2011) posit that successful organizational socialization can be achieved through the successful access and mobilization of social capital. Lin (1999) explicates four reasons for social ties: they facilitate information

acquisition, they facilitate influence on others, they help define roles, and they reinforce social identities. Moreover, Morrison (2002b) found a favorable relationship between newcomer information networks and organizational learning outcomes.

Empirical evidence suggests that newcomer proactivity is a critical element of the socialization process. For example, Saks and Ashforth (1996) studied new accountants and found that new employee proactivity was related to positive socialization outcomes, and Saks et al., (2011) found that proactivity was a pertinent factor to the successful socialization of new management students. Relatedly, Ashforth, Sluss, and Saks (2007) examined organizational tactics and proactive behaviors on socialization and learning outcomes for recent college graduate new hires. Results showed newcomer proactivity to be more predictive of learning than institutionalized tactics. Similarly, Atzori, et al., (2008) found individual proactivity was more related to learning than organizational tactics in their study of the organizational socialization of women in the Italian army.

Context is another variable to be considered when examining individual socialization tactics (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007). Meaning the individual's socialization experience is largely dependent on specific interpersonal and group-based interactions grounded in localized contexts, while focusing largely on aspects of said context (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007, Reichers, 1987). Similarly, Normore (2004) concluded that organizational socialization is dependent upon a specific organizational context comprised of a complex network of people, policies, procedures, and priorities to which new employees must adjust.

In summary, Chaoi (2012) asserts that although there is empirical evidence supporting individual tactics as more strongly related to newcomer learning than their

organizational counterparts more research is needed to examine the differential effects of organizational and individual tactics on organizational socialization, and Ashford and Nurmohamed (2012) contend that the literature on proactive behaviors is too narrowly focused, as it neglects the local context in which they are entrenched.

### **Information Seeking**

Among the different proactive behaviors, information seeking has received the most attention in the literature (Saks et al., 2011). Newcomers require information to learn about their new organizations, coworkers, and roles (Morrison, 1993). While organizational members continue to learn new things throughout their careers, organizational entry is a special boundary shift that deepens the need for information (Morrison, 2002a). A meta-analysis by Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, and Tucker, (2007) found that information seeking related positively to role clarity and social acceptance, which mediated the relationship between information seeking and socialization.

The acquisition of job and organization information is necessary for newcomers to learn and make sense of their new situation, and has been found to be significantly related to adjustment and socialization outcomes (Louis 1980; Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski 1992). Morrison (1993) contends information seeking is important for organizational newcomers for two primary reasons. First, information reduces uncertainty thus enabling newcomers to understand, predict, and control their environments. Second, information seeking allows newcomers to compensate for the fact that they are often not provided with the information that they need to master their jobs and become integrated into their organizations.

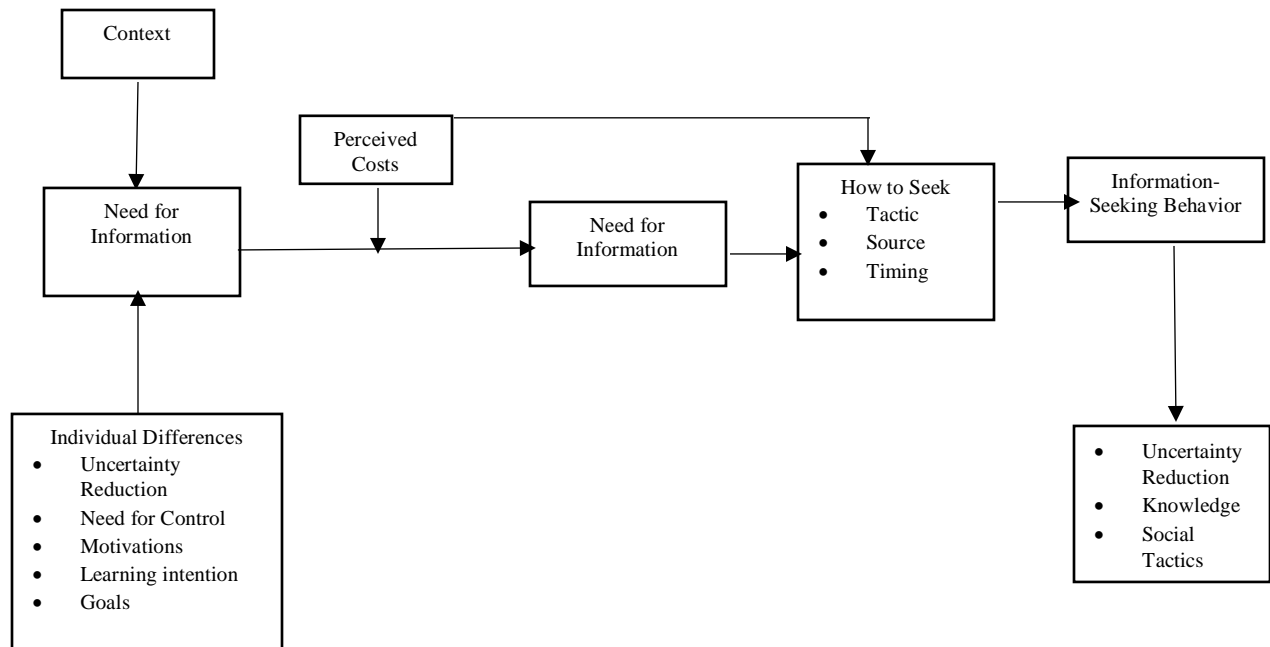
Newcomers can acquire information from interpersonal sources such as other newcomers, senior co-workers, supervisors and mentors, as well as non-interpersonal sources such as written materials, observation, and trial and error (Morrison 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski 1992). Furthermore, Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) found that newcomers relied heavily on supervisors and coworkers to acquire information, and that obtaining information from supervisors was strongly correlated with perceived knowledge. Relatedly, in her study of new accountants, Morrison (1993), found that those who sought information during their first six months on the job did better at learning their new jobs and fit in better than their colleagues who did not.

Morrison (1993) also found that different patterns emerged in terms of the type of information being sought. For example, she reports that newcomers tended to seek technical information (i.e. how to perform job tasks; and performance feedback) from supervisors, while they sought normative information (i.e. information on role demands and expectations and socialization information), primarily from other coworkers who were more at their peer level. However, Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) found no difference between information acquired from supervisors and coworkers in regard to the task and organizational domain. Nevertheless, the findings in their study did show that newcomers acquired more information from supervisors regarding their role and more information from coworkers regarding the group. Morrison (2002a) explicates these findings and others from the literature show that as newcomers' apprehensions change, the types of information that they need are likely to change as well. Thus over time, there are likely to be changes in the frequency with which the different types of information are sought relative to one another.

Morrison (2002a) developed a theoretical model of employee information seeking within an organizational context based on the findings in the extant literature. Her model as shown in figure 1 depicts the information seeking process as one that is temporal and affected by numerous aspects. The extent to which one feels a need for a particular type of information, and hence the desire to obtain it, will depend on a multitude of factors such as the individual's tolerance for uncertainty and the person's motivation to learn. Morrison (2002a) explains that although an employee will decide to seek information if the needed arises, this need for information will be weighed against the employee's perceived conceptions of its cost. In other words if the cost of seeking the information is perceived to be damaging to one's ego or public image, the need for information will be less likely to be translated into active information seeking.

Costs will also vary depending on the type of information that is desired. For instance, Morrison (2002a) hypothesizes that feedback may have greater social costs associated with it than information not related to the self. The model then takes into account how the information will be sought (assuming it is ultimately worth the cost of seeking). According to Morrison (2002a), decisions about tactics, sources, and timing all enter into the process at this stage and depend largely on the costs correlated with various selections.





*Figure 1. Integrated Model of Employee Information Seeking. Adapted from “Information seeking within organizations,” by Morrison, E. W., 2002a, *Human Communication Research*, 28, p. 236. Copyright 2002 by International Communication Organization.*

In summary, there is general support within the literature for information seeking as a powerful proactive behavior in regards to individual socialization. Chaoi (2012) concluded that the mixed findings in the literature highlight the complexity of the information seeking process within organizations, and Morrison (2002a) adds that the literature on employee information seeking is somewhat fragmented, and thus deserves future attention.

### **Newcomer Learning and Sense Making**

Klein and Heuser (2008) contend that a key component of newcomer socialization is maximizing learning across organizational levels. Although there is not complete consensus in the literature regarding how learning occurs within and across

organizational levels there is general agreement that learning spans the job and role, interpersonal and group relationships, and the nature of the organization as a whole (Bauer & Erdogan, 2012). Organizational learning has commonly been described in three interrelated ways: (1) as the attainment of knowledge, skills, and abilities (Chao et al., 1994; Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992); (2) as general adjustment (including role clarity) (Chao et al., 1994); (3) as effective support from various sources during the socialization process (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007). Moreover, Chaoi (2012) contends that not all organizational learning is related to socialization and thus the study of organizational socialization content should be bounded within the confines of the current socialization episode, i.e. what is learned to adjust to which organizational role.

Since newcomer learning is a critical component of the newcomer socialization process it is not surprising that it has been linked to both proximal and distal socialization outcomes. For example, Ashforth, Sluss, and Saks (2007) found that newcomer learning fully mediated the relationships between institutionalized tactics and outcomes such as performance and job satisfaction. Additionally, Cooper Thomas and Anderson (2002) found that their measure of information acquisition fully mediated the positive relationship between institutionalized tactics and attitudes like job satisfaction and organizational commitment in a sample of British Army recruits.

Bauer and Erdogan (2012) point out that the literature has shown newcomer learning to be related to a myriad of additional socialization adjustment variables (although not consistently) including: group integration (Chan & Schmitt, 2000; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), role clarity (Chan & Schmitt, 2000; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), task mastery (Chan & Schmitt, 2000; Kammeyer-

Mueller&Wanberg, 2003), career involvement (Chao et al., 1994), identity resolution (Chao et al., 1994), stress (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992), intentions to quit (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992), and work withdrawal (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

Several scales exist which are designed to measure organizational socialization content, otherwise known as newcomer learning (Chaoi et al., 1994; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, Taormina, 1994; Thomas & Anderson, 1998). However, Chaoi (2012) explicates that one major limitation of all current socialization measures is their inability to measure tacit knowledge, meaning knowledge gained form implicit learning. Analogously, Louis (1980) asserts that newcomer sense making of their organizational experiences is vital when attempting to understand how newcomers experience socialization.

Louis (1980) posits that in order to understand how a newcomer may cope with entry and socialization experiences, one must first understand that experience. She proposes that three factors: change, contrast, and surprise comprise the major features of said experience. Louis (1980) defines 'change' as, "An objective difference in a major feature between the new and old settings. It is the newness of the "changed to" situation that requires adjustment by the individual" (p. 235). She adds that when one starts a new job they experience a change in role and most often professional identity. The second critical factor in organizational entry experience is contrast, which is described as the noticing of particular features against a general background (Louis, 1980). Louis (1980) explicates which features emerge for the individual are partly based on the individuals past organizational experience. Louis (1980) explains that a distinctive case of contrast is

associated with the process of letting go of old roles, which frequently seem to linger well into the socialization process. Thus as experiences from prior roles are recollected, contrasts are generated.

According to Louis (1980) the third feature of the organizational entry experience is surprise, which “represents a difference between an individual's anticipations and subsequent experiences in the new setting” (p. 237). Surprise also includes one's responses to any contrasts and changes and may be positive or negative. In making sense, or attributing meaning to surprise, individuals rely on a number of inputs which include their past experiences with similar situations, their personal characteristics, their overall purposes within the situation, cultural assumptions, and information and interpretations from others in the situation (Louis, 1980).

Despite what is already known in relation to newcomer learning during the socialization process many in the field have called for more research to be done in this area (Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan; 2012, Chaoi, 2012). More specifically, Chaoi (2012), explains future research is needed on newcomer learning and sense making, and Louis (1980) contends research is needed which studies how newcomers let go of old roles as they take on new ones. Finally, Ahforth, Sluss, and Harrison (2007) suggest future research should aim to clarify the specific relationships between the dimensions of proactivity and the dimensions of newcomer learning.

### **Principal Socialization**

According to Normore (2004), “A major component of any leadership development or succession process involves socialization, whereby attention is drawn to the leader and the context simultaneously” (p.111). Crow (2006) explicates that the role

of the principal and the related socialization process have undergone a drastic transformation in the wake of the standards based era of accountability. He postulates the attention in the United States on improving principals' socialization has generally tended to result in a fragmentary collection of strategies without a conceptual understanding of socialization. Hart (1991) explains that the custodial role response (Van Manaan & Schein, 1979) is the most common outcome of principal socialization, which doesn't comport with the innovative role demands of the modern day principal. Cline and Necochea (2000) tout a similar sentiment when they state:

A paradox has been identified between the leadership demands of school reform and the current socialization processes that tend to result in administrators with a custodial orientation. Indeed, current socialization processes for many school administrators are inconsistent with the multiple roles principals must assume if they are to become the visionary leaders whose essential function is to facilitate the transformation of existing systems and structures into a new order (p. 154).

A majority of the research body on principal socialization predates the standards and accountability era of education. These demands have changed the way novice administrators approach the role, rekindling a need to continue to investigate this phenomenon (Spillane & Lee, 2014).

Although the body of principal socialization literature lacks depth (Crowe, 2006; Heck, 1995) there are some findings worth noting. Greenfield (1985) found that the principal socialization process tended to be: individual, informal, random, variable, serial, and involving both investiture and divestiture tactics. These findings were similar to those of Bengston, et al., (2013), whose study illustrated that from an organizational

perspective principal socialization tactics were collective, formal, informal, serial, and investiture. Relatedly, Hart (1991) explains that principal socialization is a highly individualized and lonely process.

In synthesizing the main problems most encountered by new principals Daresh and Playko (1994) included: problems with role clarification, or understanding who they were and what it meant to be a principal, limited technical expertise, and difficulties with socialization to the profession and the system. Walker and Qian (2006) also synthesized the issues most pressing for beginning principals. They explain that many beginning principals report a lack of support in the role, are challenged to break free from the shadow of their predecessor, are not sure how to fit in with the preexisting school culture, are challenged with dealing with feelings of loneliness and isolation, struggle with their new amount of power and authority, have difficulty developing comfort with the high amount of uncertainty attached to the role, and are challenged in finding opportunities to learn the norms, values, and beliefs of the school.

Spillane and Lee (2014) conducted a mixed methods longitudinal study to examine the problems of practice experienced by principals transitioning into the role. Their findings were similar to those of previous research (Daresh & Playko, 1994; Walker & Qian, 2006). They suggest new principals experience a ‘reality shock’ upon starting their new roles, which is brought on by a sense of ultimate responsibility. The authors contend that this sense of ultimate responsibility contributes to three main problems of practice: task volume and demand, diversity of tasks and multi-faceted role identities, and the unpredictability of the work.

Browne-Ferrigno’s (2003) investigation of teacher to principal role transitions

also highlighted the kinds of struggles many go through as they shed their teacher self and adopt an administrator identity. Analogously, Greenfield's (1985) qualitative case study found new administrators viewed four dimensions of the work context as critical determinants of a successful role-enactment. These include relations with teachers, community, peers and superiors, the necessity to establish and/or develop routines associated with organizational stability, and the maintenance of smooth day-to-day school operations.

Relatedly, Godzki's (2011) case study, which focused on a single districts new principals' and assistant principals' role identity, found that the more proactive the new administrator was in seeking and gaining role and organization related information, the more successful was their integration into their new role. He also notes that new administrators used a number of tactics such as goal setting to help in adjusting to their new role. Thus it is clear that establishing principal role identity is an essential component of the principal socialization process (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

School principals need to successfully integrate themselves within the organization while simultaneously facilitating cultural and instructional improvement. Hart (1993) explains, "Schools need their principals to become integrated into the group, but they also need creativity and new ideas. These two needs make the effects of socialization during leader succession critical factors shaping future events in the school" (p. 15). Spillane, et al., (2015) sought to examine the tensions between new principals understanding and challenges regarding the singular and collective aspects of effective leadership. Survey and interview results showed that some features of the newcomer's sense of the principal position, such as the volume and diversity of the work, lend

themselves a distributed approach to leadership, however, other aspects, such as their sense of ultimate responsibility, seem to hinder it, emboldening a more singular leadership style.

Some authors have attempted to apply the stage model structure to the principal socialization and adjustment process. Weindling and Dimmock (2006) inspected 20 years of longitudinal data to examine the problems of practice identified by British heads at various stages of their careers. Furthermore, Weindling (1999) used results from a National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) twenty-year longitudinal study of beginning principal challenges, along with other findings from the literature to construct a model of how British principals navigate their way through the headship. Stage 0 of the model refers to the preparation prior to headship. This stage is characterized by the principals' formal and informal training to become an administrative candidate. Stage 1 refers to organizational entry and encounter (first months). The authors explain that the first few weeks and months on the job are critical in the socialization process and are likely to be where the new principals sense of surprise and need for sense-making may be most prominent. Stage 2, labeled taking hold, and lasting three to 12 months, is where the newcomer begins to acclimate to the role through the recognition of key issues and the implementation of planned changes. Weindling and Dimmock (2006) point out that In the NFER study all the new heads had such a period, however not all realized it.

Stage 3 –reshaping, occurs during an administrators second year and marks the general point in time where most principals studied began to feel more comfortable in the role, seeing as they now had a year of experience under their belts. The authors explain that this is the point where principals look to implement 'major change.' Stage 4 –



refinement, takes place between years three and four. During this stage further changes and refinements are enacted. Stage 5 takes place between years five to seven, marking a consolidation point. Finally, stage 6 is described as a plateau and occurs during year eight and beyond. Although this model depicts socialization as a gradual process and recognizes certain important indicators, it does not provide detail as to how a new principal reaches a status as an organizational insider and exemplarily leader. One is still left wondering, what content must a new contemporary principal learn in the socialization process, and how do they learn it?

The process of principals being effectively socialized into the role is worthy of investigation since there is ample empirical evidence, which supports how essential the principal is in facilitating school improvement (Lytle, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; May & Supovitz, 2011; Robison, et al., 2008). However, the organizational socialization of principals is far from a saturated topic in the literature (Heck, 1995; Stevenson, 2006; Steyn, 2013). Additionally, when the existing studies examining principal socialization are further filtered it is clear that many were completed prior to the reconceptualization of the modern principal's role following the increase in scrutiny and accountability enacted upon the public education system (Cline & Nechochea, 2000; Crowe, 2006; Elmore, 2000; Normore, 2004).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Many theories have been used in studies of organizational socialization; however, there is no universal theory in the literature that describes the process (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison 2007; Chaoi, 2012). The current study utilized four theories: Need to belong, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Social Exchange Theory as

the foundation of organizational socialization. Although various studies have used one or more of the aforementioned theories as a framework for socialization (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Louis, 1980; Grodzki, 2011; Reichers, 1987), Chaoi (2012) was the first to suggest their utilization simultaneously as a theoretical framework for organizational socialization. However, no empirically based study to date has done so (Chaoi, personal communication, November 20, 2017). According to Chaoi (2012) two need theories, uncertainty reduction and the need to belong, explicate why individuals attempt to fit into their new role. Subsequently, two theories from social psychology, social identity theory and social exchange theory can be used to explain the process an individual undertakes in making sense of their new role and developing a positive social identity in it.

### **Uncertainty Reduction Theory**

Berger and Calabrese (1975) first advanced uncertainty reduction Theory (URT) in the communications field as a means for explaining the process of human interaction amongst strangers. A critical assumption of the theory is that individuals have a need to reduce uncertainty, or increase the predictability of behaviors. More specifically, when individuals are intermingling, information is shared for the purpose of understanding or learning more about the other. Informational gathering occurs, for the most part, through self-disclosure. When strangers have their initial encounter, they attempt to gain information to be able to predict or understand future behaviors (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

The uncertainties we have fall into two general categories: cognitive and behavioral. Cognitive uncertainty is the uncertainty regarding what another person has

thought or is thinking, or uncertainty about one's own thoughts. Behavioral uncertainty is associated with being able to predict or explain someone else's behavior, or in knowing what behaviors or actions are expected of us (Redmond, 2015a). Uncertainty reduction can be a proactive process, where an individual attempts to generate predictions before an interaction takes place, or retroactive where an individual is left to generate explanations and make sense of an action after the fact (Redmond, 2015a). Refinements of URT consider how predicted outcomes of an interaction factor into the uncertainty reduction process (Berger, 1986). Uncertainty reduction is primarily concerned with sense making. Where making sense of something means increasing your ability to accurately predict or explain it (Redmond, 2015a).

During the organizational socialization process new employees face considerable uncertainty (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Morrison, 1993) and URT identifies this uncertainty as a catalyst for an individual's proactive socialization behaviors (Chaoi, 2012). The anxiety associated with uncertainty (Berger, 1979) serves as motivation to reduce it (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012). Uncertainty reduction theory has been identified as the driver in an individual's socialization behaviors as well as the organization's socialization strategies (Chaoi, 2012). Furthermore, the need to reduce uncertainty has been tied to proximal socialization outcomes such as role clarity and role conflict (Ashforth and Saks, 1996). Uncertainty reduction has been examined in the context of principal socialization as well. Unpredictability of the work was a salient theme in a recent study by Spillane et al., (2015), which looked at the challenges encountered by beginning principals as they attempt to adjust to the role.

From the individual perspective uncertainty can be reduced by interactions with

organizational members (insiders) who can teach the newcomer about organizational life (Chaoi, 2012). Uncertainty is also reduced through the information and feedback provided by supervisors and peers (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Information-seeking behavior is a key variable associated with uncertainty reduction theory. Moreover a pivotal axiom of the theory states high levels of uncertainty cause increases in information seeking behavior and as uncertainty levels decline, information seeking behavior decreases (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

Berger (1979) makes a distinction between the ways people seek information about another person. He postulates this can be done in three different ways: (1) Passive strategies, which involve a person being observed, either in situations where the other person is likely to be self-monitoring, or where the other person is likely to act more naturally; (2) Active strategies, which involve asking others about the person one is interested in or trying to set up a situation where one can observe that person. Once the situation is set up one may choose to observe (a passive strategy) or converse with the person (an interactive strategy); (3) Interactive strategies, which involve communicating directly with the person.

### **The Need to Belong**

The need to belong to a group and have positive interpersonal relationships is found in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943). Maslow ranked love and belongingness needs in the middle of his motivational hierarchy. Hornsey and Jetten, (2004) posit people have a need to belong to social groups. Moreover, group identities can be fundamental to a person's self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Belonging to a group or organization can provide social backing and safety against adversarial groups

(Chaoi, 2012). Baumeister and Leary (1995) contend that individuals have a, “pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal interactions” (p. 497). Moreover, although this need to belong may be satisfied by other social spheres (e.g., one’s neighborhood), the sheer number of hours that many people are at work tends to stimulate this need in the organizational domain as well (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Two general features comprise the need to belong: The need requires frequent interactions with a specific individual or group, and the relationship is seen as a stable bond with a foreseeable future (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The authors hypothesize that as a fundamental motivation, the need to belong should stimulate goal-directed activity designed to satisfy it. People should show inclinations to seek out relational opportunities and cultivate social contact. However, Hornsey and Jetten, (2004) contend the need to belong does not necessarily have to be fulfilled through interpersonal relations. They explicate it can also be fulfilled through group memberships. Therefore an individual with a strong need to belong to an organization is more likely to engage in social interactions with other members and value their identification with said organization (Chaoi, 2012). Organizational socialization during the accommodation stage has generally been linked to two proximal outcomes of organizational socialization: to increase one’s sense of belonging and the need to reduce uncertainty (Feldman, 1976).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

George Homans, John Thibaut, Harold Kelley, and Peter Blau are largely credited with the development of Social Exchange Theory (SET). Social psychologists, John Thibaut and Harold Kelley were interested in the psychology behind small groups

following norms and rules, achieving goals, and playing roles. Their examination of costs and rewards in such settings served as a foundation for subsequent researchers interested in how people weigh costs and rewards when making decisions, particularly within the context of an interpersonal relationships (Redmond, 2015b).

Homans (1958) proposed examining such an interaction as an exchange adhering to specific economic principles revolving around rewards and costs. He argued that in general, two or more actors try to get something that is of greater value to them than the cost they incur as a result of such exchanges. Blau (1964) emphasized the criticality of the social setting. He noted that social exchanges differ from economic exchanges in that terms of social exchanges are not spelled out explicitly, but rather left for a given individual to decide. However, because of the diverse contributions and applications of social exchange theory there is not really any one set of accepted concepts and propositions that is called social exchange theory (Redmond (2015b).

In fact, Emerson (1976) argues that that it is not a theory at all. Instead he explicates social exchange is better thought of as a frame of reference within which many theories are in dialogue with one another, whether in agreement or disagreement. Emerson (1976) who primarily studied social exchange within the fields of sociology and social psychology, explained that the, “Exchange approach in sociology might be described, for simplicity, as the economic analysis of noneconomic social situations. Exchange theory brings a quasi-economic mode of analysis into those situations” (p. 336).

The theory’s main proposition is that people socially interact with others because they stand to gain some reward for doing so. In turn, the other actor must also gain some

reward from the exchange. This process serves to create interdependent relationships. Furthermore, if an interaction does not provide one with a reward or the reward doesn't match (equity) or exceed your cost (profit), you are likely to end it (Redmond, 2015b). This cycle focusing on contingent interdependence has been termed 'reciprocal interdependence' in the literature (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In this vein, a "reciprocal exchange" is understood as one that does not include explicit bargaining (Molm, 2003). Homans (1958) adds, "Social behavior is an exchange of goods, material goods but also non-material ones, such as the symbols of approval or prestige" (p. 606). Individuals seek to have profitable exchanges such that the rewards one gets outweighs the cost to get them (Homans, 1958).

Moreover, these exchanges are classified as dynamic whereby the nature of the exchange is influenced by the history of past exchanges. Rewarding exchanges result in the formation of positive relationships, and conversely punishing exchanges discourage future contact (Homans, 1974). As positive relationships between newcomers and organizations develop, the exchanges are likely to become more predictable, resulting in uncertainty reduction, as well as acting as a stimulus to allow individuals to form organizational identities and derive meaning from their jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). From an organizational socialization lens such exchanges provide the neophyte with opportunities to acquire information and knowledge related to the role, work group, and organizational culture (Chaoi, 2012).

Korte (2007) suggests that the primary influence on learning is the individual interactions and relationships one has with members of their workgroup. The quality of these interactions and relationships can strengthen or impede the successful entry into an

organization. Reichers (1987) adds that it is through the process of verbal and social interaction through which meaning and identity arise. These interactions allow the newcomer to understand organizational realities and establish situational identities. This symbolic interactionism perspective on social exchange posits that meaning arises out of social interactions, and individuals interpret their own perceptions of events in response to the interactions they have with others in a setting. Due to the fact that individuals contribute to the meaning that arises in a setting, newcomers may change aspects of their social selves and come to attach meaning to aspects of organizational life through the social exchanges they engage in with others in the organization (Reichers, 1987).

Korte (2007) poses the question, “How might the social relationships developed toward a newcomer support or hinder learning to fit into the organization?” (Problem section, para. 2). Some in the literature have speculated that these interactions need to occur between the newcomer and agents of socialization. Those who can help organizational neophytes make sense of their new role through giving feedback and helping the newcomer develop a sense of efficacy (Reichers, 1987). Moreover, Morrison (2002a) applied principals of social exchange theory in the development of her newcomer information seeking model. A critical component of her model entails the newcomer weighing the perceived cost of the information sought against its perceived benefit.

### **Social Identity Theory**

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a social psychology theory primarily developed by by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The term describes those facets of a person’s self-identity based upon their group memberships along with the construct of self-categories or mental groupings of a person’s perception of him or herself



(Chaoi, 2012; Turner & Oakes, 1986). Self-categories that are unique from those of others are called personal identities, whereas shared similarities with groups of people are termed social identities (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994).

More specifically, self-categories are cognitive groupings of self in relation to one class of stimuli and different from another class. Personal identity refers to self-categories that define the individual as a unique person; one that is distinctive from others in a group of persons. Social identity refers to social categorizations of ones' self and others. These self-categories aid in defining the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with others in the given group (Turner, et al., 1994). Social categorizations are seen as cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment. However, they do not merely systematize the social world; they also provide a means for self-reference in that they create and define the individual's place in society. These groups provide their members with an identification of themselves in social terms (Ashforth & Mael 1989; Tajifel & Turner, 1986).

Social identity theory originally viewed these classifications of identities on opposite ends of a continuum. However, it has since been argued that social and personal identities represent different levels of self-categorization, which are in fact related, albeit in a hostile fashion. Thus the more people focus on one level of their identity, the less they focus on the other (Hornsey & Jetton, 2004). Hogg and Terry (2000) assert that people derive part of their identity and sense of self from the organizations to which they belong. The strength of an organization's identity is determined by the extent to which a shared understanding of the essence of the organization is ubiquitous among its members. This identity may be echoed in shared values and beliefs, mission statements, or the

organizational climate (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The stronger the organizational culture, the greater the internalization of its identity (Ashforth, 1985).

Within the organizational environment the frequency of social categories suggests that social identities are likely to represent a significant component of individuals' organizationally situated self-definition (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), therefore for many people their professional and/or organizational identity may be more prevalent and important than attributed identities based on gender, age, ethnicity, race, or nationality (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Additionally, Ashforth and Mael (1989) explain that newcomers are concerned with building a self-definition, of which the social identity makes up a large part. Social identities emerge as a part of a natural process of self-definition, motivated by the need to reduce uncertainty and enhance self-esteem (Hogg & Terry, 2001). Hogg and Terry (2000) assert that the need to reduce uncertainty is more prevalent than other potential motives in building an organizational identity as uncertainty may be more adaptive when assigning the values and behaviors appropriate to a particular organizational role.

Social identity theory depicts individuals as wanting to develop a “situated identity” in their new setting (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007, p. 38). Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) explicate that building a situated identity requires effort on the part of the individual undertaking the role change. This involves creating a narrative that makes sense to the person and others. Narratives in this context fill in the gaps that arise between one's new and old role (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012). Organizational socialization is a key process in helping an organizational neophyte define themselves as a true member of an organization holding particular roles. Thus social identities serve as

powerful influences over employee affect and behavior (Chaoi, 2012). Moreover, they aid in developing a sense of 'who' to complement a sense of 'where' one is (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Role change is central in organizational socialization in general and school principal socialization in particular (Spillane & Lee, 2014). New roles require new skills, behaviors, attitudes, and patterns of interpersonal interactions. Thus the process may produce fundamental changes in one's self-definitions (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). However, over time, people adjust aspects of their identity to accommodate role demands and modify role definitions to preserve and enact valued aspects of their identity (Ibarra, 1999). Building a situated identity has proved especially difficult for principals as they assume a multi-faceted role, which includes competing and overlapping instructional, managerial, and political identities. For newcomers, this role conflict potentially creates identity predicaments as they transition into the principalship (Spillane et al., 2015). Schein (1968) add that individuals construct social selves, which allow them to fulfill various role expectations. However, Van Manaen (1978) explicates that when people undergo a role change, their a priori understandings of that role are bound to change in either a subtle or a dramatic fashion, regardless of the prior information they had about their new role. Similarly, Louis (1980) describes this same phenomenon, as a special case of contrast associated with the process of letting go of old roles, which often seems to continue well into the socialization process. Therefore, most researchers agree that people have multiple identities that they enact in different social contexts and that identities change and adapt in response to challenges from the social environment (Ibarra, 1999).

Hogg and Terry (2000) contend the responsiveness of social identity to social contexts is a foundational feature of the theory. Hogg and Terry (2000) expound on this point when stating:

The responsiveness of social identity to immediate social contexts is a central feature of social identity theory-and self-categorization theory within it. The cognitive system, governed by uncertainty reduction and self-enhancement motives, matches social categories to properties of the social context and brings into active use (i.e., makes salient) that category rendering the social context and one's place within it subjectively most meaningful (p. 125).

Crow (2006) suggested that principals, for the most part, were socialized with little attention paid to what could be learned from their teaching experiences. Other findings suggest that principals can struggle with letting go of their teacher identity once assuming an administrative role (Brown-Ferrigno, 2003). However, Spillane and Lee (2014) found that new principals bring dispositions and knowledge from their experiences as classroom teachers that influence their understanding of the role of a principal. People are not content to have their identity determined by the social cognitive context, contrarily, they say and do things to try to influence the boundaries so that in their estimation a more self-favoring identity becomes salient (Hogg & Terry, 2000). It is evident that principals must engage in large amounts of identity work which has been defined as people's efforts in building, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising their identities (Ibarra, 1999).

Social identities are a natural product of the process of self-definition. There creation is motivated by an individual's predisposition to reduce uncertainty and to enrich

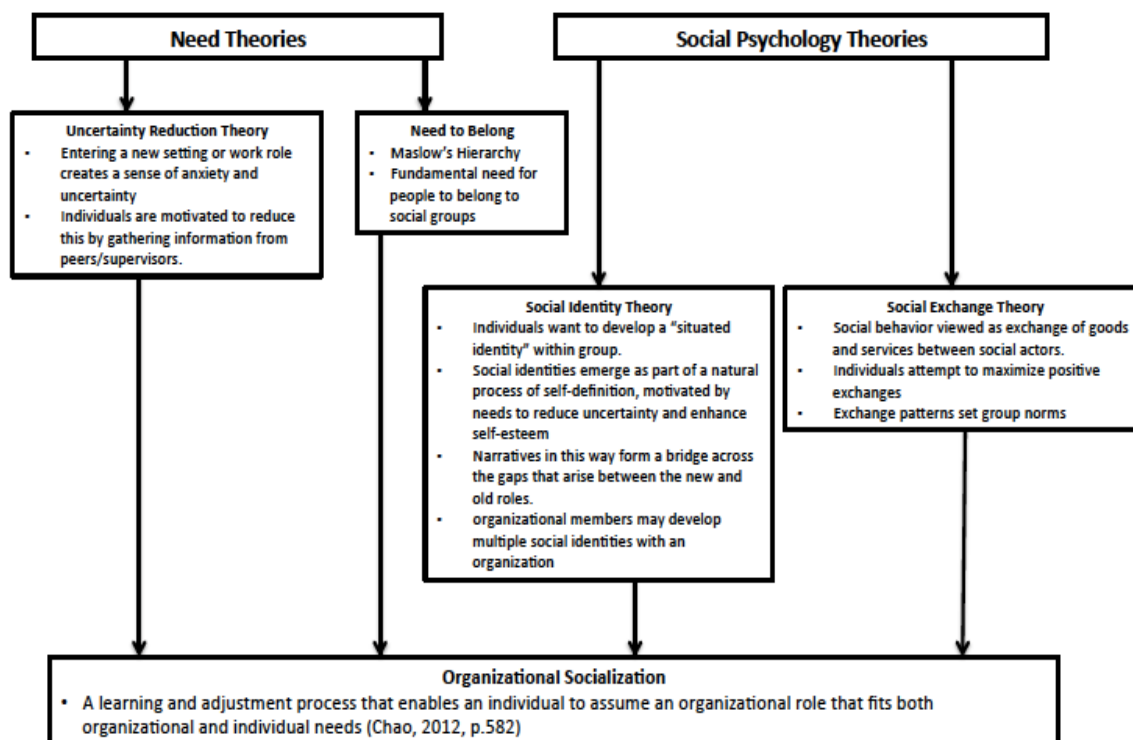
self-esteem (Chaoi, 2012; Hogg & Terry, 2001). Furthermore, organizational members may develop many different social identities with an organization as individuals may see themselves as belonging to a job class, work group, department, division, etc. (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). However, Ashforth and Johnson (2001) postulate that personal identities likely also contribute to this dynamic. They explain that individuals tend to personalize the portrayal of their social identities because no two individuals are alike and the behavioral norms associated with a given identity usually allow some latitude in the way an identity is expressed.

The authors initially question, but later conclude that identities can in fact be simultaneously salient. They explain that each sub identity depicted is a discrete piece of the whole, and individuals often must invoke transition scripts to move from one identity to another. However, Ashforth and Mael, (1989) contend that a person's various social identities could result in inconsistent role demands. Analogous to Ashforth and Johnson (2001), they recommend identity conflict be resolved through ordering, separating, or buffering the identities. The organizational socialization process assists the newcomer in making sense of these various perceptions of self in order to allow the employee to identify as a full-fledged organizational member (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). However, the process by which people negotiate with themselves and others, what identities they craft as they assume a new work role, has received little empirical attention (Ibarra, 1999).

As figure 2 summarizes, when first joining an organization, especially when that involves a hierarchical role change, the needs to reduce uncertainty and belong to the group initiate the socialization process (Chaoi, 2012). However, according to Chaoi

(2012) these need theories do not explain how one would go about fulfilling these needs. Social exchange theory provides a structure for how a newcomer may proactively seek to reduce uncertainty and form an attachment to a group or organization (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Chaoi, 2012; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1958). Relationships emerge from a series of social exchanges, and the meaning derived from those exchanges and relationships (sense-making) helps one form a social identity within the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Chaoi, 2012; Hogg & Terry 2000, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

According to Chaoi (2012) uncertainty reduction theory, the need to belong, social exchange theory, and social identity theory coalesce to form a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the organizational socialization process. Chaoi (2012) explains, “The need theories address the question, why do people engage in organizational socialization? SET helps us to understand how people become socialized in an organization. Whereas SIT helps us understand, why is organizational socialization important” (p. 585-586).



*Figure 2. A conceptual Model of the 4-theory framework used to frame the organizational socialization process.*

## Summary

Organizational socialization emerged as an offshoot of adult socialization focusing on the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the organization and the individual (Chaoi, 2012; Van Maanen, 1978). Early models in the literature focused on the stages newcomers would progress through in a linear fashion on their way to becoming full-fledged organizational insiders (Feldman, 1976, 1981; Wanous, 1992). However, they fell out of favor due to their rigidity and failure to recognize the individual as an active participant in the socialization process (Fisher, 1986; Louis, 1980; Morrison, 1993). Although the policies and processes enacted by the organization designed to provide support to the newcomer during the adjustment process have been the focus of a

great deal of the organizational socialization literature (Chaoi, 2012; Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Bengston et al., 2013), another perspective that has produced important findings in the field is the level of newcomer proactivity in the process (Morrison, 1993, Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, Reichers, 1987).

Although there have been some noteworthy findings related to the importance of newcomer proactivity to the success of the organizational socialization (Ashorth, Sluss, & Saks, 2007; Atzori et al., 2008; Saks & Ashforth, 1996; Saks et al., 2011), some scholars have called for more research to be conducted on the topic due to some inconsistent findings and the complexity of the process (Chaoi, 2012; Morrison, 2002a).

Newcomer learning as an outcome of newcomer proactivity has also garnered its fair share of attention in the organization socialization literature. It has been shown to be related to a variety of socialization and adjustment variables including: job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Cooper Thomas & Anderson, 2002), role clarity (Chan & Schmitt, 2000; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), task mastery (Chan & Schmitt, 2000; and identity resolution (Chao et al., 1994) to name a few. However, despite what is already known regarding the importance of newcomer learning during the socialization process many in the field have called for more research to be done in this area (Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan; 2012, Chaoi, 2012).

Most organizational socialization research involves new entry-level employees breaking into an organization (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012; Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007). Only a sparse number of socialization studies have focused on the socialization process of leaders (Sakks & Ashforth, 1997), and the organizational socialization of principals in particular (Heck, 1995; Stevenson, 2006; Steyn, 2013). The



importance of the principal being successfully socialized into the role is of critical significance due to the influence they hold over the culture and instructional direction in the building (Lytle, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; May & Supovitz, 2011; Robinson, et al., 2008). Many scholars point to a need for further research on how principals adapt to and make sense of their roles, especially in light of the recent changes to the structure and demands of the job (Cline & Nechochea, 2000; Crowe, 2006; Elmore, 2000; Normore, 2004). Crowe (2006) encapsulates this shift well when he states:

This dramatic increase in accountability and public scrutiny has added to the complexity of the principal's job, requiring principals to be entrepreneurial, to be more focused on student outcomes and instructional processes, and to be more connected with their communities (p. 316).

Additionally, most recent studies of principal socialization have examined this phenomenon through an organizational rather than individual lens (Bengston, et al., 2013, Normore, 2004; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005). Although there are some modern examinations of the principal socialization process that attempt to understand how principals adjust to and make sense of their complex roles (Brown-Ferrigno, 2003; Grodzki, 2011; Spillane & Lee, 2014; Spillane et al., 2015), none of these focused intensely on how a principals utilization of proactive behaviors directly influences the organizational socialization process.

Finally, the socialization literature as a whole has been criticized for its inconsistent use of theory, as there is no universally accepted theory that frames the process (Ashforth Sluss, & Harrison 2007; Chaoi, 2012). Therefore the present study attempts to address some of the above described gaps in the literature by examining the

role of proactivity, in relation to how modern principals experience and make sense of their role transitions using a proposed, but never tested, framework of organizational socialization which relies on two need theories, uncertainty reduction theory and the need to belong, and two theories from social psychology, social Identity theory and social exchange theory as its conceptual foundation.

### **Chapter III: METHODOLOGY**

A mixed methods research design employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches in types of questions, methods, data collection and analysis, procedures and inferences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). Greene (2007) explains that the purpose for conducting a mixed methods study is to, "...better understand the complexity of the social phenomenon being studied" (p. 20). Modern conceptions of mixed methods research demand much more than just the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. A study is truly mixed only if qualitative and quantitative approaches are integrated throughout the stages of given study. Thus, integration would occur across the conceptualization stage, the experiential stage, and the inferential stage (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). In other words true mixed methods studies should combine an exploratory and confirmatory purpose, qualitative and qualitative data strands, and qualitative and quantitative analysis and merging techniques (Greene, 2007).

There are numerous types of mixed methods designs to employ as the methodological framework in a given study. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) add that it is imperative to identify a design approach that is congruent with the study's problem, purpose, and research questions. In sequential mixed methods designs the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study occur in chronological order. Questions or procedures of one strand emerge from or are dependent on the data from the other strand. The final inferences are based on the results from both the quantitative and qualitative strands. The second phase is conducted in order to confirm or disconfirm findings from the first phase or to provide further explanation or depth to the findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

The present study utilized a sequential mixed design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The quantitative phase involved the dissemination of two questionnaires to a large sample of K-12 public school principals. The findings from this phase served to elicit general trends and perceptions of the sample of administrators as well as allow for statistical analysis to be conducted in order to gain insights into the significance of the findings. A subsequent qualitative phase employed findings from the questionnaires to select a sample of principals with whom to conduct follow up semi-structured interviews as they represented information rich cases for in depth study (Patton, 2015). Quantitative and qualitative data were merged in the final stage of analysis to form integrated meta-inferences based on the different results (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) (see Appendix A for conceptual map of study).

Greene (2007) explains that she views the mixing of methods as a methodological strategy that can yield better insight into the phenomenon being studied. She adds individual methods offer one perspective or partial view, thus a better understanding can be achieved through a, "...respectful conversation among different ways of seeing and knowing" (p. 79). Thus the researcher aimed for the quantitative and qualitative phase of the study to coalesce in the analysis phase to form a multi-layered representative model of the phenomenon under study. Figure 3 summarizes the overall structure of the study.

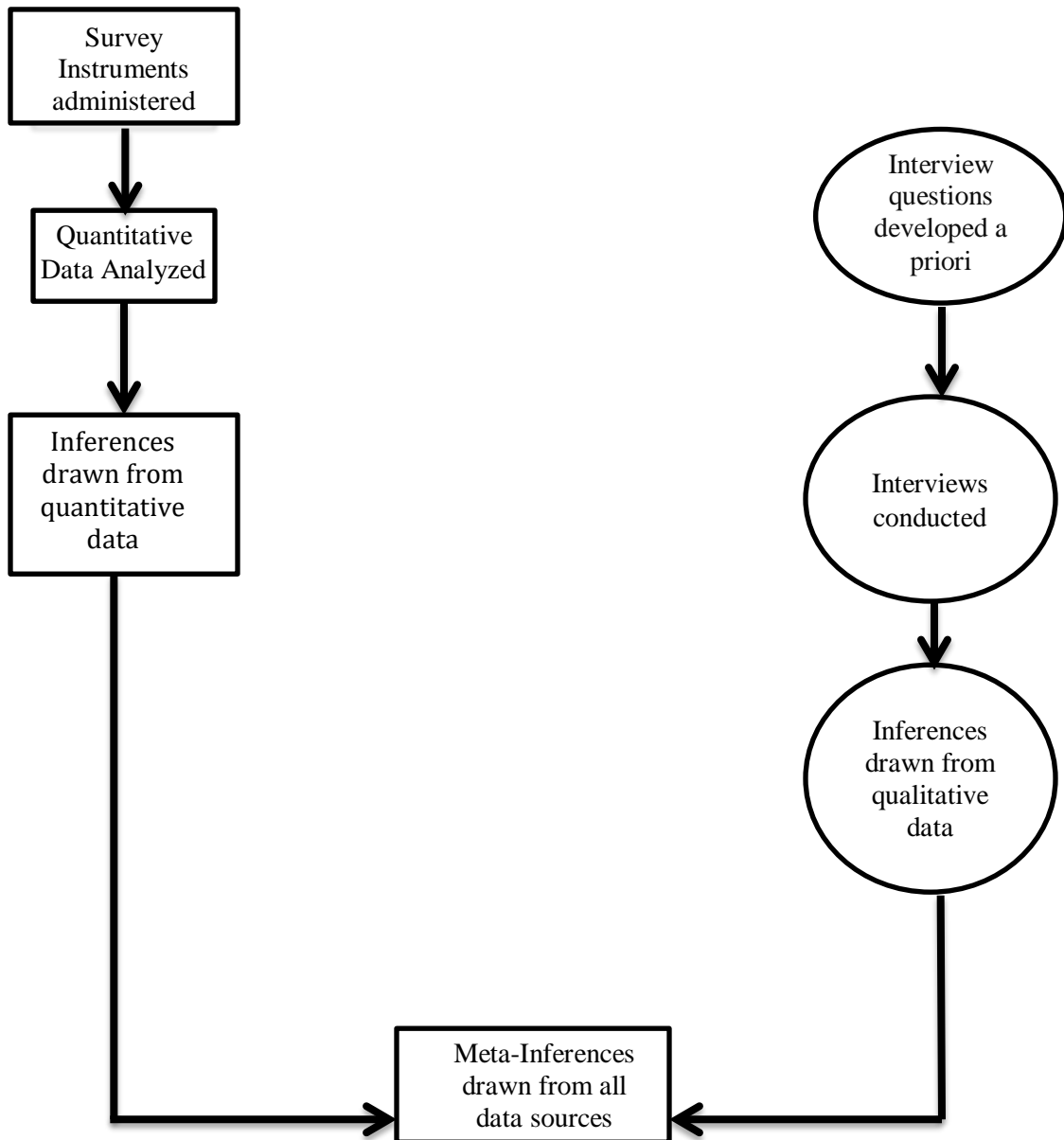


Figure 3. Diagram of Procedures. Adapted from “*Foundations of mixed methods research*,” by Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A., 2009, p. 277. Copyright 2009 by Sage Publications Inc.

## **Research Questions**

In discussing the criticality of the research questions in a mixed methods study, Bryman (2006 as cited in Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) states:

...This position with regard to the debate about quantitative and qualitative research prioritizes the research question and relegates epistemology and ontological debate to the sidelines. In doing so, it clears the path for research that combines quantitative and qualitative research (p. 129).

The present study embodies both confirmatory and exploratory aspects, thus the corresponding research questions were constructed to investigate divergent aspects of the organizational socialization of K-12 principals. The overarching research questions are general in nature. They subsume the preceding questions as a means to provide a framework for a general inquiry of the phenomenon under study. They are ambiguous in terms of a specific quantitative and qualitative approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The quantitative research questions are confirmatory in nature. The first three questions seek to elicit the information acquisition patterns of principals in terms of the sources and contextual domains utilized as principals gather the necessary information to adjust to their roles. Data regarding these questions was derived from the Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire (SIAQ). The fourth research question is also confirmatory in nature. It seeks to understand which contextual domains principals perceive to have learned the most about, as well as how this domain specific learning contributes to their overall sense of knowledge in the role. Data regarding this question was gathered via the Newcomer Learning Scale (NLS).

The qualitative research question is exploratory in nature and seeks to ascertain the degree of proactivity principals elicit in the organizational socialization process as well as their perceptions of their individual socialization experiences. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted in order to allow for the emergence of the most salient themes from the data. Data pertaining to all of the research questions were merged to create integrated meta-inferences (Greene, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), which were used to create a representative model of the phenomenon under study (Christ, 2013).

Overarching:

1. How do K-12 principals perceive and make sense of the process of organizational socialization?
2. Does The Need to Belong, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Social Identity Theory serve as an accurate theoretical foundation for the organizational socialization of K-12 principals?

Quantitative:

1. Is there a difference in principal information acquisition among different organizational sources?
2. Is there a difference in principal information acquisition among contextual domains?
3. Does contextual domain have an effect upon which sources principals use to acquire information?
4. Which types of domain specific learning contribute the most to a K-12 principal's overall sense of knowledge?

Qualitative:

1. What role do K-12 principals play in their organizational socialization?

## **Role of the Researcher**

A worldview is one's general philosophical orientation about the world as well as the nature of research (Creswell, 2014). Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe it as follows:

A paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs (that or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holders, the nature of the "world," the individuals place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts... (p. 107).

Guba and Lincoln (2005) acknowledge four basic beliefs, which converge to form one's worldview: ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Ontology relates to the form and nature of reality. It attempts to answer the question, what is there that can be known about? Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge. It attempts to answer the question, what is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would be knower and what can be known? (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The third belief constituting a worldview is one's axiology. Axiology is concerned with values and ethics in research and how the researcher's values influence how the research is conducted (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The final belief constituting one's worldview is methodology. Guba and Lincoln (1994) pose the methodological question, "How can inquirer (would-be-knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known" (p. 108). Patton (2015) cautions, that although methodology is part of one's worldview it will primarily be influenced based on the subject being investigated.

Contrariwise, Biesta (2010) opposes the idea of paradigms. He states, "One of the main problems with the notion of a paradigm is that it tends to bring under one heading a range of different ideas and assumptions that do not necessarily have to go together" (p.



98). Biesta (2010) warns that the notions of qualitative and quantitative research, which dominate the historical literature, are problematic. He explicates that research itself cannot be wholly qualitative or quantitative and that these categories are much more appropriate for describing types of data. He warns that the common practice of using these terms to describe things like methods and ontological and epistemological assumptions is unhelpful and imprecise.

Many researchers have advocated for the use of alternative paradigms beyond the traditional post-positivist-constructivist dichotomy, especially in response to the emergence of mixed methods research (Christ, 2013; Greene, 2007; Mertens, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (2005), who have authored many seminal works on the topic state, “Indeed the various paradigms are beginning to “interbreed” such that two theorists previously thought to be in irreconcilable conflict may now appear, under a different theoretical rubric, to be informing one another’s arguments” (p. 192). They go on to explain that they believe there is great potential to merge viewpoints and look at things from a multi-perceptual lens (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Relatedly, Niglas (2010) advocates viewing the major components that makeup one’s worldview as a continuum rather than dichotomy.

The attempt to merge qualitative and quantitative methodologies within antagonistic worldviews has drawn criticism in methodological literature. However, since the 1980’s there has been a case made that quantitative and qualitative approaches to research are not mutually exclusive (Niglas, 2010). Yet, although a mixed methods approach to research is now widely accepted and continues to gain popularity it has

struggled to some degree to develop a corresponding worldview (Biesta, 2010; Johnson & Gray, 2010).

Two alternative worldviews that have gained prominence in the mixed methods literature are pragmatism and a dialectic stance (Greene & Hall, 2010). Despite its popularity as a commensurate paradigm for mixed methods researchers there are many interpretations of what the pragmatist paradigm actually means (Biesta, 2010; Greene & Hall, 2010). In fact, Christ (2013) contends that there is still no consensus on what a pragmatist paradigm involves. This sentiment is also echoed by Greene (2007) who admits that discussing the key tenets of pragmatism poses a significant challenge, as there are many incarnations of the philosophy. Pragmatism emerged as a philosophical tradition in the United States towards the end of the nineteenth century. Charles Sanders Pierce, John Dewey, and William James are largely credited with the helping to define and popularize U.S. pragmatism (Johnson & Gray, 2010). Pragmatism rejects the idea that the function of thought is to describe, represent, or mirror reality. Instead, pragmatists consider thought as a means for prediction, problem solving and action. Pragmatists believe that most philosophical topics are best viewed in terms of their practical uses and successes (Creswell, 2015).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) highlighted several key tenets from classical pragmatism that they advocate as complimentary to a mixed methods philosophy, which Johnson & Gray (2010, p. 88) summarized as follows: (a) rejects dichotomous either or thinking; (b) agrees with Dewey that knowledge comes from person-environment interaction; (c) views knowledge as both constructed and resulting from empirical discovery; (d) takes the ontological position of pluralism (i.e. reality is complex and

multiple); (e) takes the epistemological position that there are multiple routes to knowledge and that researchers should make “warranted assertions” rather than claims of unvarying Truths; (f) views theories instrumentally (i.e. theories are not viewed as fully true or false, but as more or less useful for predicting, explaining, and influencing desired change); and (g) incorporates values directly into inquiry and endorses equality, freedom, and democracy. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) explain that pragmatists make decisions regarding the use of either (or both) quantitative or qualitative methods based on the research questions and the ongoing phase of the inductive/deductive research cycle. Similarly, Christ (2013) explicates that pragmatism recognizes that various forms of qualitative and quantitative data should be collected in order to understand the problem from multiple perspectives which can ultimately be used create a representative model.

A mixed methods dialectic stance welcomes multiple philosophical tenets as well as more than one methodology and type of method into the same study, and engages them in a respectful dialogue throughout the inquiry process (Greene & Hall, 2010). The dialectic stance recognizes the legitimacy of multiple paradigms as they represent different ways of viewing and interpreting the world (Greene, 2007). Moreover, because of the complexity of human phenomenon, an in-depth understanding can be obtained through the utilization of multiple perspectives (Greene & Hall, 2010). Greene (2005) explicates that a mixed methods dialectic stance seeks:

Understanding that is woven from strands of particularity and generality, contextual complexity and patterned regularity, inside and outside perspectives, the whole and its constituent parts, change and stability, equity and excellence, and so forth. That is [it] seeks not so much convergence as insight...the

generation of important understandings and discernments through the juxtaposition of different lenses, perspectives, and stances...(p. 208).

Teddlie and Johnson (2009) describe the term ‘dialectical pragmatism’ as a refinement to classical pragmatism as applied to mixed methods research. The philosophy combines Greene’s (2007) dialectical approach and philosophical pragmatism (Johnson & Gray, 2010). Johnson and Gray (2010) formally define the term as follows:

Dialectical pragmatism is a pragmatism tailored for mixed methods research. The base word (pragmatism) refers to the applicability of the core tenets of philosophical and methodological pragmatism. The adjective “dialectical” emphasizes that mixed methods researchers must carefully listen to, consider, and dialogue with QUAL and QUAN perspectives, and learn from the natural tensions between these perspectives, when developing a workable solution for a mixed methods research study (p. 88).

This conception of ‘dialectical pragmatism’ was also explicated by Johnson and Greene (2011 as cited by Christ, 2013) who state:

...Ontologically, dialectical pragmatism relies on *pluralism*; subjective, intersubjective, objective realities, and their interrelationships. Epistemologically, dialectical pragmatism relies on multiple perspectives that can take many different forms (e.g. conflict, differences, balance, and agreement). The dialectical pragmatic position suggests different standards and criteria should be combined in a single study based on research questions and ethical needs and goals. The result is a mixed package that is justified to the degree that it meets the identified values, goals, outcomes, and social and local needs... (p. 89).

Johnson (2012) revised the term to dialectical pluralism, but it's meaning remains the same. Johnson (2012) classifies dialectical pluralism as a meta-paradigm as it listens to and has dialogue with multiple paradigms. He advocates dialectical pluralism as being able to provide a meta-ontological, meta-epistemological, and meta-ethical perspective that merges or produces agreeable, "packages of goals and values that serves multiple important groups and perspectives" (p. 753).

The researcher assumed a dialectic pragmatic worldview during this study. More specifically, the researcher's ontology during phase one of the research was commensurate with a post-positivist worldview. Post-positivists believe in an objective singular reality. The ontological focus is on getting as close to the truth as possible, while simultaneously recognizing that this can never be done perfectly and that there is always the possibility of error due to flawed human mechanisms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This interpretation of reality is most appropriate when utilizing survey research. The second phase of the study, which involved conducting semi-structured interviews, recognized a constructivist ontological stance. Constructivists recognize a relative view of reality in that they believe in the mental construction of reality as a result of one's social experience; thus denying the existence of absolute truths (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Shwandt (1994) explicates that reality is constructed through the collective generation of meaning, however Crotty (1998) adds that different people may construct different meaning from the same phenomenon.

In phase one of the study two quantitative questionnaires designed to elicit how and from whom principals gather information as well as elicit their perceptions of knowledge acquisition pertinent to their organizational socialization were utilized. In this

phase the researcher's epistemological stance was aligned with that of post-positivism. Post-positivists believe meaning is independent of the individual, thus the researcher attempts to distance him or her self from the participants in order to gain a 'valid' and 'reliable' representation of knowledge (Christ, 2014). The researcher attempts to maintain objectivity by taking an etic role throughout the research in an attempt to minimize the chance of biasing the findings (Christ, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Alternatively, a constructivist epistemological stance was taken during the second phase of the study when principals were interviewed in order to ascertain their perceptions of their individual socialization experiences. The co-construction of knowledge between researcher and participants is the epistemological foundation of constructivism. Since the researcher assumed an emic role in the constructivist paradigm he acknowledged potential biases and negotiated a shared set of values with participants (Christ, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The researcher's methodological stance is again dialectic in nature. The first phase of the study employed a post positivist survey methodology. A deductive approach was the focus. Four a priori domains derived from the literature (task, role, relationship/group, and organization) were used as a means for determining the strength of relationship and significant differences between variables (Christ, 2014). The second phase of the study relied upon an inductive approach where participants engaged in the cyclic process of reviewing and clarifying themes/results and conclusions from the interview data. In summary the researchers worldview (see Appendix B for researcher's worldview matrix) is aligned with dialectical pragmatism (Johnson & Gray, 2010) or as it is recently been referred dialectical pluralism (Johnson, 2012) as it listens to and

embraces multiple perspectives regarding ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology (Christ, 2013).

## **Procedures**

### **Bounding the Case**

The data collection in this study took place over the course of three months. This allowed enough time for the survey to be administered, the results to be analyzed, and for enough interviews to be conducted to reach a point of thematic saturation (Charmaz, 2014). Specifically, two quantitative questionnaires were electronically sent to K-12 public school principals in 33 states and the District of Columbia as well as to superintendents in 26 states. Overall, principals from 42 states and District of Columbia comprised the target population for the study (see Appendix F for a list of sampled states). Contacting each states department of education in order to receive a list of administrators or attaining principal/superintendent contact information from the state department of education website served to identify the population under study. The dissemination of the surveys to multiple states yielded a fairly large sample size ( $n=227$ ;  $n=110$ ). Responding participants were included in the study if they gave consent and are currently a K-12 school principal. Participants for the second phase of the study were conveniently selected based on their willingness to participate in a semi-structured interview. Overall, fourteen, K-12 principals were interviewed for the study (phase II sample  $n=14$ ).

## **Sample**

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) define sampling as, “The process of selecting a subset or sample unit from a larger group or population of interest” (p. 356). There are two main components to a sampling design. First, the researcher must decide on the strategy to select the participants, which is known as the sampling scheme. Second, the researcher must decide on the number of participants to include in the study, which is known as the sample size (Collins, 2010). Hence a sampling design consists of the framework that encompasses the sampling scheme and sample size (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

Quantitative researchers typically utilize probabilistic sampling techniques that rely on randomly selecting the sampling units that are representative of the target population, thus ensuring each member of the population has an equal chance of selection. Large sample sizes are usually sought in quantitative research because the research objective is to make external statistical generalizations from the sample to the target population (Collins, 2010). Purposive sampling schemes are usually employed in qualitative research and involve the researcher purposely selecting a small number of participants with the goal of gaining in depth insight into a phenomenon or a unique perspective (Collins, 2010; Maxwell, 2013). When using a purposive sample, the goal is to add to or generate new theory by obtaining new insights from different perspectives about the phenomenon under study (Collins, 2010).

The mixed methods researcher typically chooses procedures that generate representative samples when addressing the quantitative strand of the study and conversely when addressing the qualitative strand of the study the researcher usually uses



sampling techniques that yield information rich cases (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Collins (2010) explicates that sampling design decisions in mixed methods studies are more complicated than in a purely quantitative or purely qualitative study:

In a mixed research context, the investigator must decide on a sampling design for the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study, and these decisions affect the quality of the researchers' meta-inferences and the degree to which the findings can generalize or transfer to other individuals, groups, and contexts (p. 354).

The present study utilized a sequential mixed methods sampling design. In this type of sampling scheme the results of first strand influence the methodology of the subsequent strand. More specifically, in this study the final sample of the quantitative phase served as a sampling frame for the qualitative phase (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This has also been referred to as a nested sample in the mixed methods literature as the qualitative sample is a subset of the quantitative (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

The quantitative phase of this mixed methods study employed a probabilistic sampling technique. A simple random sample (Collins, 2010) was sought. Specifically, the researcher sent an inquiry to the state department of education requesting a list of the names and emails of all current K-12 principals or retrieved this information directly from each state's department of education's website if available. Ultimately, contact information for K-12 public school principals in thirty-three states and the District of Columbia as well for the superintendents in twenty-six states were obtained. Overall, principals from forty-two states and District of Columbia comprised the target population for the study. The researcher sent all principals on these lists an email with a description of the study and a link to the survey instruments and survey consent form (see Appendix

G). Additionally, a similar email was sent to all aforementioned superintendents asking that they forward the survey and study information to all principals in their district (see Appendix H). Responding participants were included in the final quantitative sample if they are currently a K-12 school principal and gave consent. Reminder emails were sent to all principals 1-3 weeks after the initial message was delivered. The nation-wide dissemination of the surveys aided in yielding a fairly large sample size. In all, 227 participants responded to the SIAQ and 110 responded to the NLS. Although both survey instruments were anonymous demographic questions showed responding participants spanned the realm of experience in terms of how long they have been a school principal as well as if they have had more than one principalship. The diversity of the sample allowed for the emergence of a comprehensive view of the organizational socialization process which spans career stages and levels of experience and is certainly not unique to brand new first time employees (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Van Maanen, 1978).

A convenient sampling technique (Collins, 2010) was employed in the qualitative phase of the study. Selection criteria included completing the questionnaires in the first phase of the study and currently serving as a principal in a K-12 school. All cases fitting the sampling frame criteria were selected for inclusion in the qualitative phase of the study if they responded to the researcher's follow up interview queries. A sample size of 14 for this phase of the study proved to be adequate in reaching thematic saturation (Charmaz, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Of the fourteen principals who participated in the interview phase of the study four were completing or just completed their very first year as a principal overall. Seven

were in their current role for three years or less and an additional three principals had been in their current role for less than five years. The remaining four principals interviewed were in their current role for between five and ten years. Moreover, as displayed in table 1, six of the principals in the qualitative sample cited their current principalship as their only experience as a school head. The sample was also disaggregated to account for overall experience, as some participants had held more than one principalship. This analysis showed that four principals had 0-3 years experience overall, two had 3-5 years, four had 5-10 years of overall experience and 4 had ten plus years.

Table 1  
*Breakdown of Qualitative Sample*

Years Experience	In Current Role	Overall
0-3	7	4
3-5	3	2
5-10	4	4
10+	0	4

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

Two quantitative measures were utilized within this phase of data collection. Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire (SIAQ) is designed to measure which sources within the organization are most utilized by the organizational newcomer in attaining information encompassing four domains: task, role, group, and organization (i.e. which informational sources are perceived as most valuable to principals) from each of three interpersonal sources (mentors, supervisors, coworkers) and three non-interpersonal sources (observation, experimentation, and

objective referents). The measure consists of 33 items. The task, role, and group domains were assessed using eight items each and nine items represent the organizational domain (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). The authors of the questionnaire chose these domains as they identify them as being widely accepted within the literature as most prevalent to organizational socialization (Chaoi, 2012; Feldman, 1981; Ostroff & Kozlowski's, 1992). The task domain includes features pertaining to task mastery and how to perform the job. Items comprising the role domain focus on establishing the boundaries of responsibility and learning the behaviors appropriate to the role. The group domain items pertain to how to interact with and get along with co-workers. Finally, the organizational domain items focus on learning about the values, politics, and culture of the organization. Coefficient alphas were computed for each of the domains by source scores and ranged from .80 to .91 with a mean and median of .85 (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

The measure was presented in a matrix form with the 33 items of domain features arrayed against the potential information sources (see Appendix C). Sources were defined as: mentor-someone at an equivalent or higher level than you who has helped you by taking you "under their wing." They could have done so in a formal or informal capacity; supervisor-your immediate supervisor or boss; co-worker-a member of your work group or other employee at your level or lower; watching- learning by observing how others do things; trying- trial and error, or experimenting in the role; manual-learning from a manual about policies, procedures, jobs, etc. or learning from formal orientation/training (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). It should be noted that the researcher made slight modifications to the original definitions for mentor and manual. Respondents

were to indicate how much information they acquired from each source about each item. Ratings were made along a 5-point scale with scale points of 5 (a great deal of information), 4 (a lot of information), 3 (some information), 2 (a little information), and 1 (no information). Scores for the measure were computed by averaging the item ratings for each of the four domains across the five sources. This resulted in a final summary score indicative of how much information was acquired about the task, role, group, and organization for each potential source (Ostroff & Kozlowski's, 1992).

Four demographic questions were added to the questionnaire by the researcher. They pertain to whether the participant had past experience as a school principal, how long they have been in the current role, and the source of their succession into the principalship (i.e. insider or outsider). Additionally, the researcher omitted one question from the task, role, and group domains and two questions from the organizational domain in order to minimize administration time. Thus the final measure consisted of 32 total questions. Moreover, the mentor information source was omitted from the measure, as it is not possible to know if every participant has access to this source. The decision to eliminate the mentor source from the measure is consistent with the decision made when the instrument was validated (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Finally, the researcher made slight modifications to the wording of some of the items to make them more specific to an educational context.

The second quantitative measure used during this phase of the research was Cooper-Thomas' (in press) Newcomer Learning Scale (NLS). This scale is a newer version of Cooper-Thomas, Paterson, Stadler, & Saks' (2014) measure and was derived from other prominent measures of socialization. It is designed to measure newcomer

learning across three domains: role learning, relationships learning, and organizational learning. (H. Cooper-Thomas, personal communication, October 30, 2017). The role and organizational learning domain include five items each and the relationships domain consists of six items. The role-learning domain contains items related to knowing how to perform the job's tasks. The relationship-learning domain contains items focused on how one's role fits with the roles of colleagues and how to work together. The organizational learning domain contains items pertaining to knowledge of the organization's objectives and goals (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014). The researcher made slight modifications to the wording of some of the items to make them more specific to an educational context (see Appendix D). All items were measured on a 7- point Likert Scale, with scale points of 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly agree), 4 (neither agree nor disagree), 5 (slightly agree), 6 (agree), and 7 (strongly agree).

The researcher also examined each item contained in both questionnaires in order to discern where it would best fit within the theoretical framework. As seen in figure 4 the items in the role domain in the NLS and the task and role domain in the SIAQ coalesce with the constructs making up uncertainty reduction theory and social identity theory as they are most concerned with learning what is required of the role and establishing an organizational identity. The relationships domain of the NLS questionnaire and group domain in the SIAQ survey best fit the constructs of the need to belong and Social Identity Theory. The items in this domain are concerned with establishing and maintaining social relationships and establishing a congruent identity with that of the organization. The items within the NLS's organizational learning domain and the organization domain of the SIAQ embody the constructs of uncertainty reduction

theory as they pertain to learning the norms, goals, and values of the organization in order to reduce uncertainty and strive toward establishing oneself as an organizational insider. Social exchange theory factors into all the domains and items of both instruments as information acquisition and newcomer learning are highly dependent on context specific individual and group exchanges within an organizational structure.

Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992)	Task	Role	Group	Organization
Newcomer Learning Scale Cooper-Thomas (in press)	Role		Relationships	Organization
Theoretical Framework:	Uncertainty Reduction; Social Identity		Need to Belong; Social Identity	Uncertainty Reduction
Social Exchange Theory				

*Figure 4. Merging of Questionnaire Domains and Theoretical Framework*

As mentioned above surveys were sent electronically to a national sample. Responding participants were included in the final quantitative sample if they were currently serving as a principal in a K-12 public school. A link to the survey instruments was sent via email. The first page of the survey consisted of an electronic survey consent form. If participants opted in they were directed to complete the survey. If they opted out by not giving consent the survey software took them to the end of the survey and would not let them complete the instrument. Survey Monkey was used as the electronic survey delivery system. The survey was sent out electronically for monetary and convenience purposes. A reminder email was sent to all potential principal participants to try and increase the overall response rate and in turn the size of the sample (Creswell, 2015).

Survey responses were stored in a password-protected file to which the researcher had sole access. A space was provided at the end of each survey to enable respondents to provide an email address if they were willing to be re-contacted to participate in a voluntary follow up semi-structured interview (see Appendix I for interview letter). The decision to provide an email contact was completely optional. If the participant chose not to take part in a follow up interview their survey responses were completely anonymous, as no identifiable information was collected. If respondents chose to voluntarily provide an email address in order to be re-contacted for an interview the researcher kept a record of the email address, which was stored in a password-protected file. The sole researcher was the only person who had access to this identifiable information, which was deleted once data analysis was complete (see Appendix J for interview consent form).

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

Qualitative data was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with selected principals whose information helped illuminate answers to the questions under study (Patton, 2015). Selection criteria included completing the questionnaires in the first phase of the study and currently serving as a principal in a K-12 school. Cases fitting the sampling frame criteria were selected for inclusion in the qualitative phase of the study. The interview protocol was designed using the constructs of the theoretical framework and quantitative instruments in order to gain an in depth understanding of the perceptions of each participants individual socialization experiences. Some of the questions were adapted from interview protocols used in Bengtson, et al's. (2013) study of school system organizational socialization practices



regarding school principals and Feldman's (1976) study of the individual socialization of hospital employees. The researcher authored the remainder of the protocol with questions being derived from the empirical and theoretical socialization and social psychology literature (see Appendix E for interview protocol).

All interviews occurred via phone. A high quality digital recorder was used to record all interviews. Participants were not directly identified during the interview tapings. Each participant was assigned a numerical pseudonym prior to any interviews taking place in order to protect their anonymity. Each interview was transcribed into Microsoft Word for subsequent analysis. All transcriptions used the assigned numerical pseudonym to reference each participant. The original digital recordings were deleted from the digital recorder after transcriptions were completed and reviewed by the interviewees. All transcriptions were stored in password-protected folders to which only the researcher has access. All interviewees were re-contacted for member check purposes.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to the collection of any data. Furthermore, the researcher took exhaustive precautions to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants throughout the study. Specifically, numerical pseudonyms were used for all audio files and interview transcripts and survey results were stored in a password-protected file. The sole researcher in this study was responsible for all data collection and analysis and was the only one who had access to the identities of the participants. Additionally, recordings were deleted after each interview was transcribed. Furthermore, any record kept by the researcher during the data collection process matching an interviewee to a pseudonym or survey responded to

an email address was kept in a password protected file and deleted after data analysis was completed. Transcripts and survey results were stored for the duration of the study.

## **Quantitative Data Analysis**

### **Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire (SIAQ)**

Data from this measure was first analyzed descriptively to determine its measures of central tendency and variation. This allowed the data to be described and summarized. Additionally, a two way repeated measures MANOVA was utilized as a means to determine if sources were differentially relied upon to learn about different domains (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). A MANOVA test was selected due to the presence of multiple dependent variables (Huck, 2004). The dependent variables were the mean information acquisition scores for each of the sources for each domain. Two within subject factors (domains and sources) were used. Data was input into SPSS for analysis. A summary table of the MANOVA is included in the study's results section (see table 3). Additionally, the results of the study are discussed in text by providing readers with the F value and degrees of freedom associated with the main and interaction effects as well as the level of significance or p value ( $\alpha=.05$ ) used in the analysis.

Significant main and/or interaction effects using a p value ( $\alpha=.05$ ) resulted in post hoc analysis being conducted. Specifically, pairwise comparisons were computed among ratings for source use within each domain as a means of evaluating the extent to which principals relied on various sources to provide information about the various contextual domains. Pairwise comparisons were also utilized to compute information acquisition within the four domains across all sources in order to evaluate which domains principals sought the most information about. Pairwise comparisons were also employed to

compute overall source use across all domains in order to evaluate which information sources principals most relied upon regardless of domain. (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Szafran, 2012; Verma, 2016).

### **Newcomer Learning Scale (NLS)**

Data from this measure was first analyzed descriptively to determine its measures of central tendency and variation. This allowed the data to be described and summarized. Furthermore, a multiple regression analysis was conducted, where overall knowledge acquisition served as the criterion variable, and sub-scores for each context domain (role, relationships, and organization) served as predictor variables for the purpose of evaluating the effect each independent variable had on the dependent variable of interest, which in this case is overall learning in the role. Significant results ( $\alpha=.05$ ) and the  $R^2$  value are reported. Additionally, in order to determine the relative importance of each independent variable the researcher also analyzed and reported the standardized beta weights. A summary table of the regression analysis is provided (see table 6).

It should be noted that although there is currently a debate in the methodological literature on whether or not to classify measures using Likert type rating scales as ordinal or interval variables (Harpe, 2015), many researchers argue that there is a distinction between a Likert item and a Likert Scale (group of items) where the later can be treated as an interval variable and analyzed using parametric tests (Brown, 2011; Harpe, 2015).

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Interview data was analyzed using initial, focused, and axial coding procedures in order to allow for the most theoretically prevalent themes and categories to emerge

(Charmaz, 2014). Initial coding involves naming each word, line, or segment of the data. According to Charmaz (2014), “This coding is more than a beginning; it shapes an analytic frame from which you build the analysis” (p. 113). Focused coding involves using the most frequent or significant initial codes to sort, synthesize, and integrate large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2014) adds, “Focused coding means using certain initial codes that had more theoretical reach, direction, and centrality and treating them as the core of analysis” (p. 141). During this stage a researcher must focus on what the initial codes have to say and the comparison one makes with and between them. Engaging in focused coding brings you closer into the comparative process (Charmaz, 2014). Finally, axial coding is used to connect your focused codes to specific properties and dimensions in order to begin to build theory from the data (Charmaz, 2014).

Initial coding was utilized as a means to begin to interact with the data because initial codes stick very close to the data, show actions, and indicate the progression of events (Charmaz, 2014). This allowed the researcher to begin to understand administrator perceptions of their experiences, and what actions either directly or indirectly influenced their current beliefs about their role, relationships, and overall organizational fit. Focused coding was used to construct categories and recognize themes in which to sort the data that emerged directly from the initial codes. Using these coding procedures ensured that the researcher was staying true to the individual perspectives of the participants during the data analysis phase and increased the accuracy and credibility of the findings. Finally, axial coding was employed to build theory from the interacting focused codes. The researcher then reexamined the literature to ascertain if the findings

were consistent with those of past studies as well as how they coalesced with the theoretical framework used to frame the study.

More specifically, after the initial interview protocol was developed the following procedures were implemented: (1) Interview and record purposefully selected individuals; (2) Listen to interviews immediately after interview making memos of immediate thoughts; (3) Transcribe interviews (add to memo's); (4) Print transcript with wide margin. Make notes as first step of the analysis process; (5) Highlight powerful quotations; (6) Review memos and side bar notes. Look to create 8-10 initial 1-2 word descriptive codes; (7) Define (operationally) the code word, create the list and then re-read over transcript; (8) Using codes highlight (using shading colors in word) the different parts of all the transcripts associated with each code; (9) Create a code report (cut and paste coded data into single documents); (10) Examine the code reports. Consider eliminating or combining if very little data present; (11) Read through code reports, consider deeper interpretation of the data (secondary codes); (12) Recode transcripts to capture secondary coded material; (13) Consider how the secondary codes interact (connect) to each other (axial coding); (14) Begin to create theory from the interacting axial codes; (15) Re-examine the literature to see if similar findings about topic are available to increase study's credibility (T. Christ, personal communication, April 2, 2015). Table 2 provides a summary of both the quantitative and qualitative measures as well as the analysis technique used for each particular data strand.

Table 2  
*Data Analysis Plan*

<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Analysis Method</b>
Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire (SIAQ)	Descriptive statistics, two-way RM MANOVA, post hoc pairwise comparisons (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Szafran, 2012; Verma, 2016).
Newcomer Learning Scale (NLS)	Descriptive statistics, Multiple regression analysis (Huck, 2004),
Semi-Structured Interviews	Initial, Focused, Axial Coding (Charmaz, 2014)

### **Data Merging**

Quantitative data is presented in tabular form. These tables include the results of the statistical analysis. Qualitative data is also presented in tabular form. This table contains the prominent themes that emerged as a result of the semi-structured interviews. Presenting both types of data in the same format makes it easier for comparisons to be made between them. Quantitative and qualitative data were merged in the final stage of analysis to form integrated meta-inferences (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Greene (2007) identifies five potential purposes for mixing methods in a study: triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion. The purpose for mixing methods in this study is two fold: triangulation and complementarity, which is methodologically, appropriate when utilizing a sequential design (Collins, 2010). For the purposes of this study triangulation is primarily seen as a source of extra knowledge rather than to confirm what is already known from the first approach taken. Moreover, triangulation is seen as an extension of a research program, which includes the systematic selection of various methods in combination with different perspectives (Flick, Garms-Homolova, Herrman, Kuck, & Rohnsch, 2012). Therefore, although there is some level

of agreement between the survey and interview data, the main purpose of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to attempt to achieve an in depth, multi-layered, level of knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Complementarity involves mixing methods in order to achieve a broader more comprehensive social understanding by using methods that tap into different dimensions of the same phenomenon (Greene, 2007). This study utilized quantitative survey data, which encompasses the strengths of being able to use a large sample to determine trends and strength between variables. However, surveys do not allow for asking more complex how and why questions related to the topic, or provide the opportunity for thick rich data to be collected. Therefore this study also made use of qualitative interviews, which allow for in depth data to be gathered albeit from a much smaller sample of participants. Quantitative survey research and qualitative interviews adhere to different definitions of what and how something can be known thus there utilization with in the same study coalesces with a complementarity purpose for mixing methods.

### **Validity and Credibility**

The present study employed a mixed methods design, therefore the researcher must establish quantitative validity and reliability, qualitative credibility and trustworthiness, and mixed methods integration (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009). There are many types of validity to consider when conducting quantitative research. Internal validity in quantitative research refers to the accuracy of inferences drawn about the cause-and-effect relationship between variables in a particular study (Creswell, 2015). Additionally, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) define internal validity as, “the degree to which alternative explanations for the results can be ruled out” (p. 298). Quantitative

researchers can strengthen the overall finding of their studies by specifically addressing common threats to internal validity (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). Additionally, reliability should be considered when using a quantitative instrument. Reliability in quantitative research means that the scores gathered from the instrument(s) or observations used in a study are stable and consistent (Creswell, 2014). In order to combat these threats the researcher chose to utilize pre-established measures, which are recognized as valid and reliable in the socialization literature (Chao, 2012; Cooper-Thomas, et al., 2014).

Statistical conclusion validity corresponds to the appropriate use of statistics to measure the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable within a particular study (Creswell, 2015). It is essentially a measure of the degree of appropriateness for the statistical procedures used to analyze quantitative data (Tashakkori & Teddle, 2009). Statistical conclusion validity was established through using the appropriate types of statistical analysis based on the study's research questions and methodology as well ensuring the data met the appropriate statistical assumptions related to its analysis in order to draw appropriate conclusions from the findings. Additionally, a large sample size was sought to increase the validity of the surveys' findings.

The qualitative phase of the study involved interviewing selected administrators. Therefore it was important to establish qualitative trustworthiness and credibility in the research in order to strengthen the legitimacy of the findings. Credibility in qualitative research refers to whether or not the reconstructions of the researcher are credible representations of the original multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296).



Maxwell (2013) uses the term qualitative ‘validity’ as a way to refer to the, “...correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (p. 122). Trustworthiness in qualitative research is defined as the degree to which a researcher can convince an audience that his or her findings are worth paying attention to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). The credibility of a researcher’s findings are contingent on whether or not he or she has established trustworthiness (Patton, 2015).

A major impetus to qualitative credibility is the suspicion that the researcher has shaped findings in accordance with pre-established biases. Maxwell (2013) suggests dealing with this issue by explaining your potential biases and how you plan to deal with them. Additionally, this assumption can be combated by engaging in systematic search for alternate themes and divergent explanations of your data (Patton, 2015). The researcher established credibility by looking for other ways of organizing the data and pursuing alternate conclusions. According to Patton (2015), “this demonstrates intellectual integrity and lends considerable credibility to the final set of findings and explanations offered” (p. 654). Another way in which the researcher established credibility behind the findings is through searching for and attempting to explain negative cases. Maxwell (2013) explains that in order to truly show that you have adequately examined alternative hypotheses and negative cases you need to collect thick rich data to validate that you have collected a clear full picture of what is going on. The researcher collected thick rich data in the form of 14 individual semi-structured interviews from which to draw qualitative conclusions.

Member checking, specifically with the transcript data gathered, was employed as a credibility method in order to ensure the accuracy between the findings and the data (Patton, 2015, p. 658). Maxwell (2013) explains:

This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your biases and misunderstandings of what you observed (p. 126-127).

Copies of the transcribed interviews were sent to each participant for them to review.

Triangulation can also serve to increase the credibility of a study's findings. Two forms of triangulation also served to establish credibility in the present study. The researcher utilized methods triangulation (Greene, 2007) as the quantitative and qualitative data were merged in order to present a richer more in depth picture of the findings. According to Patton (2015), "When multiple analytic approaches yield similar results across different analytic biases, confidence in the resulting findings is increased." (p. 663). He goes on to explicate that often quantitative and qualitative methods can be used in a complimentary fashion to answer different types of research questions that do not coalesce easily in order to provide a well-integrated single picture of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, the researcher engaged in theory triangulation (Denzin, 1978, as cited in Patton, 2015, p. 316) as four theories were integrated, two of which are need based (the need to belong and uncertainty reduction theory), and two of which are from the field of social psychology (social identity theory and social exchange theory) into one combined framework.

It is also imperative that a qualitative researcher establishes trustworthiness in order to strengthen their credibility. According to Patton (2015) trustworthiness is attained through use of systematic inquiry procedures, interpersonal skills, researcher competency, and high ethical standards. This research was conducted in accordance with the aforementioned traits in an effort by the researcher to establish trustworthiness and credibility.

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) explain that the quality of the meta-inferences derived from the separate qualitative and quantitative strands of a mixed methods study can be assessed by examining the quality and rigor of the studies procedures used to answer the research questions (design quality) as well as the credibility of the individual inferences made in the study based on the results (interpretive rigor). In order to ensure the present study yielded quality meta-inferences with a high degree of commensurability, which refers to the extent the meta- inferences drawn reflect the integration of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected (Nastasi, Hitchcock, & Brown, 2010), the researcher worked diligently to make sure that the research design is suitable to answer the proposed research questions, that the procedures used were implemented with fidelity, and that the data analysis procedures were accurate and appropriate in reference to the study's purpose and proposed research questions.

Moreover, the researcher maintained a high level of interpretive rigor by preserving high standards of interpretive and theoretical consistency as well as integrative efficacy. Interpretive consistency refers to how closely the drawn conclusions match the study's findings as well whether multiple conclusions based on the same results are in agreement (Teddlie &Tashakkori, 2009). The researcher ensured that all conclusions

drawn are grounded in the data collected. In other words the researcher did not take statistical liberties or impart bias onto any of the study's findings. Theoretical consistency refers to whether each inference made is consistent with current theories or empirical findings (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). The researcher conducted a thorough review of the empirical and theoretical literature prior to data collection and analysis in order to ascertain how the study's findings converge or diverge with what is already known about the phenomenon under study. Finally, the researcher strengthened the interpretive rigor of the study by establishing integrative efficacy, which refers to the degree in which inferences made in each strand of the study are effectively integrated into a consistent meta-inference. This is accomplished by ensuring meaningful conclusions are drawn on the basis of consistent or inconsistent results (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009).

Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) discuss the concept of a mixed methods legitimization model intended to maximize the validity of the meta-inferences drawn. One of the components of their model specifically addressed in this study includes sample integration. This refers to the relationship between the qualitative and quantitative sampling procedures employed in the study. The sampling design utilized in the present study ensures the selection of information rich individuals from a larger random sample of the population. The qualitative sample is dependent on the quantitative sample, which is methodologically appropriate when conducting an explanatory sequential study (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009). Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) also refer to inside-outside balance in their model, or the balance of emic and etic perspectives. A dialectic pragmatic paradigm was used in order to establish said balance. The dialectical worldview adopted in this study also addresses the issue of the successful integration of

paradigmatic mixing raised in the mixed methods legitimization model (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) also include weakness minimization in their model, meaning the extent to which respective qualitative and quantitative approaches compensate for potential weaknesses. This study utilized quantitative survey data, which encompasses the strengths of being able to use a large sample to determine trends. Yet, surveys do not allow for asking more complex how and why questions related to the topic, or provide the opportunity for thick rich data to be collected. However, this study also used qualitative interviews, which allowed for in depth data to be gathered albeit from a much smaller sample of participants. The two forms of data taken together have the potential to offset their individual weaknesses and create a multi-layered picture of the phenomenon under study. Finally, as discussed above, multiple validities were demonstrated in the study. The addressing of validity, credibility, and legitimization from a quantitative, qualitative, and mixed perspective strengthens the overall quality of the meta-inferences drawn in the study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009).

## **Chapter IV: RESULTS**

This study utilized a sequential mixed methods design to investigate the socialization experiences of current K-12 principals. More particularly, the proactive behaviors of principals in terms of their information acquisition and overall organizational socialization were explored along with how the information principals gathered within four contextual domains contributed to their perceived aggregate organizational knowledge base. The following research questions framed the study:

Overarching:

1. How do K-12 principals perceive and make sense of the process of organizational socialization?
2. Does The Need to Belong, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Social Identity Theory serve as an accurate theoretical foundation for the organizational socialization of K-12 principals?

Quantitative:

1. Is there a difference in principal information acquisition among different organizational sources?
2. Is there a difference in principal information acquisition within contextual domains?
3. Does contextual domain have an influence on which sources principals use to acquire information?
4. Which types of domain specific learning contribute the most to a K-12 principal's overall sense of knowledge?

Qualitative:

1. What role do K-12 principals play in their organizational socialization?

Two survey instruments were used to gather the quantitative data analyzed in the analysis. Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire (SIAQ) is designed to measure which sources within the organization are most utilized by the organizational newcomer in attaining information encompassing four

domains: task, role, group, and organization (i.e. which informational sources are perceived as most valuable to principals) from each of three interpersonal sources (mentors, supervisors, coworkers) and three non-interpersonal sources (observation, experimentation, and objective referents, (i.e. which methods of information seeking are perceived as most valuable to principals). As noted earlier the mentor source was excluded from the measure utilized as it was unknown if all of the respondents had access to a mentor or not. The measure consisted of 33 items. The task, role, and group domains were assessed using eight items each and nine items represent the organizational domain (Ostroff & Kozlowski's, 1992).

Respondents were to indicate how much information they acquired from each source about each item. Ratings were made along a 5-point scale with scale points of 5 (a great deal of information), 4 (a lot of information), 3 (some information), 2 (a little information), and 1 (no information). Scores for the measure were computed by averaging the item ratings for each of the four domains across the five sources. This resulted in a final summary score indicative of how much information was acquired about the task, role, group, and organization from each potential source (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

The second measure used during the quantitative phase of the research was Cooper-Thomas' (in press) Newcomer Learning Scale (NLS). This scale is designed to measure newcomer learning across three domains: role learning, relationships learning, and organizational learning. (H. Cooper-Thomas, personal communication, October 30, 2017). The role and organizational learning domain include five items each and the relationships domain consists of six items. All items were measured on a 7- point Likert

Scale, with scale points of 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly agree), 4 (neither agree nor disagree), 5 (slightly agree), 6 (agree), and 7 (strongly agree).

Data for the qualitative phase of the study was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews. The interview protocol was designed using the constructs of the theoretical framework and quantitative instruments in order to gain an in depth understanding of the perceptions of each participants individual socialization experiences.

## **Quantitative Results**

### **Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire (SIAQ)**

It has been proposed that information seeking is important for organizational newcomers for two main reasons (Morrison, 1993). First, information reduces uncertainty (Berger, 1979), thereby empowering newcomers to understand, predict, and control their environments. Second, information seeking enables newcomers to compensate for the fact that they are often not provided with the information that they need to master their jobs and become integrated into their organizations (Jablin, 1984). Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire (SIAQ) is designed to measure which sources within the organization are most utilized by the organizational newcomer to gather information across four contextual domains.

The data from this measure was analyzed via a two way repeated measures MANOVA in order to determine if sources were differentially relied upon to learn about different domains. The dependent variables were the mean information acquisition scores for each of the sources for each domain. Two within subject factors (domains and sources) were used. Significant main and/or interaction effects using a p value ( $\alpha=.05$ ) resulted in post hoc analysis being conducted. Specifically, pairwise comparisons were



computed among ratings for source use within each domain, information acquisition among the four domains across all sources, and overall source use across all domains.

Assumption tests were performed prior to conducting the repeated measures MANOVA on the SIAQ results in order to ensure the validity of the findings. Normality was examined through visual inspection of Q-Q plots of the studentized residuals. Six of the twenty dependent variables showed some deviation from normality, however the decision was made to continue with the analysis due to the large sample size ( $n=227$ ) and the MANOVA's robustness to deviations from normality (Garson, 2013; Verma, 2016). Multivariate outliers were screened for using Cook's Distance and Mahalanobis Distance. The presence of univariate outliers was investigated for through examination of the studentized residuals for values greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations (Laerd Statistics, 2015a). In all, 15 unusual cases were identified. The analysis was rerun to determine if the omission of these cases would have an effect on the findings. The results of the second analysis were not significantly different from what was found in the original, thus the findings from the original analysis are reported (Laerd Statistics, 2015a; Verma, 2016).

Additionally, sphericity was examined using Mauchley's Test which indicated this assumption was violated for both domain  $\chi^2 (5) = 43.506$   $p < .001$ , and source  $\chi^2 (9) = 298.236$   $p < .001$ , as well as the interaction between them,  $\chi^2 (77) = 576.978$   $p < .001$ . The severity of the violation of sphericity as well as the large sample size makes a multivariate analysis an appropriate technique to maximize power (O'Brien & Kaiser, 1985).

The repeated measures analysis of the SIAQ showed a significant main effect for domain,  $F(3, 224) = 26.554$   $p < .001$ , as well as for source,  $F(4, 223) = 113.1$   $p < .001$ . Furthermore, as indicated in table 3, results revealed a significant domain by source interaction,  $F(12, 215) = 29.674$   $p < .001$ .

Table 3  
*Multivariate Test Results*

Effect	F	df	Sig	Partial Eta Squared
Domain				
Wilks' Lambda	26.554	3	.000*	0.262
Sources				
Wilks' Lambda	113.10	4	.000*	0.670
Domain * Source				
Wilks' Lambda	29.674	12	.000*	0.624

\*Significant at  $P < .001$

Post hoc analysis was performed in order to examine the significant findings in more detail. The significant interaction between domain and source was examined in order to ascertain the extent to which principals differentially relied on various sources to provide them with information within each domain. Pairwise comparisons were computed among ratings for source use within each domain. A Bonferroni adjustment was used on the confidence interval for this analysis in order to reduce the potential for type I error due to multiple comparisons being made. Significant comparisons along with means and standard deviations are shown in table 4.

In the task and role domain trying was used significantly more than watching. Furthermore, trying and watching were used significantly more than the interpersonal sources of supervisor and co-workers. Additionally, all sources were relied on significantly more than manual. These findings vary slightly from what Ostroff and

Kozlowski (1992) found using the same questionnaire. They found virtually no difference between sources within the task and role domain other than the fact that all were relied on to a significantly greater extent than manual. However, they do note that trying was used to a greater extent than watching after newcomers had been in the role for five months.

Furthermore, Morrison (1993) found newcomers are more apt to approach supervisors for task related information and coworkers for role related information. Yet, Chan and Schmidt (2000) contend that new employees preferred coworkers to supervisors for task related technical information. Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) reported no difference between supervisors and coworkers in the task domain, but found more information to be provided from supervisors than coworkers in the role domain. The results of the present study found no difference between the information acquisition of principals between supervisors and coworkers within the task and role domains.

Results differed when examining source use within the group domain. Here watching was used significantly more than trying, and both watching and trying were relied upon to a significantly greater extent than supervisors and coworkers. However, co-workers were utilized significantly more than supervisors. Moreover, as in the previous two domains all sources were relied upon to a significantly greater degree than manual. Analogously, Ostroff and Kozloski (1992) also found watching to be the most significant information seeking source utilized in the group domain and that co-workers were relied on to a greater extent than supervisors.

In the organization domain watching was utilized significantly more than co-workers, trying, supervisor, or manual and all sources were relied upon to a significantly

greater extent than manual. Similarly, Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) found watching to be relied upon in the organizational domain more than any other source and manual to be the least utilized. However, unlike the present study they found supervisors and co-workers to be relied on to a greater extent than trying.

Secondary analysis was also undertaken in order to determine which sources were most utilized by principals in gathering information across all domains. Significant comparisons are presented under column means in table 4. A Bonferroni adjustment was used on the confidence interval for this analysis in order to reduce the potential for type I error. Results revealed the non-interpersonal sources of watching and trying were relied upon the most by principals. Among the interpersonal sources coworkers were relied upon more significantly than supervisors. Additionally, all sources were relied upon significantly more than manual. Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) and Morrison (1993) did find monitoring tactics to be used more than any other method of information acquisition, however, in Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) study monitoring was followed by the interpersonal sources and then trying in terms of utilization.

Subsequent analysis was also undertaken in order to evaluate which contextual domains principals acquired the most information about. A Bonferroni adjustment was used on the confidence interval for this analysis in order to reduce the potential for type I error. As shown in table 5, principals acquired information within the task and role domains significantly more than either the group or organization domains. There was no significant difference found between the task and role domain or the group and organization domain. Using the same measure Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) found newcomers acquired information in the task domain above all others. They also reported

that new employees reported requiring significantly more information about the role than the group domain, and more about the group than the organization.

Table 4  
Means and Standard Deviations for SIAQ

Domain	<u>Interpersonal Sources</u>				<u>Non-personal Sources</u>						Row Means		Significant Comparisons <sup>a</sup>
	Supervisor Mean	SD	Coworker Mean	SD	Watching Mean	SD	Trying Mean	SD	Manual Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Task	3.41	1.15	3.57	0.98	3.89	0.86	4.14	0.82	2.44	1.12	3.49	0.99	T > W; T, W > S, C; T, W, S, C > M
Role	3.45	1.09	3.44	0.96	3.96	0.84	4.18	0.82	2.22	1.06	3.45	0.95	T > W; T, W > S, C; T, W, S, C > M
Group	2.96	1.13	3.51	0.93	4.22	0.79	3.99	0.83	1.79	1.07	3.30	0.95	W > T; W, T > C, S; C > S; W, T, C, S > M
Organization	3.44	1.05	3.56	0.93	3.96	0.77	3.49	0.89	2.37	0.93	3.36	0.91	W > C, T, S, M; W, C, T, S > M
Column Means	3.31	1.11	3.52	0.95	4.01	0.82	3.95	0.84	2.21	1.05			W, T > C, S, M; C > S*; W, T, C, S > M

Note: Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

<sup>a</sup> In the significant comparison column, a greater than sign indicates significant differences within a row at  $P < .001$

\*Significant at  $P < .05$

Table 5  
*Pairwise Comparisons for Domains*

Domain		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig
Task	Role	.041	.018	.122
	Group	.193*	.024	.000
	Organization	.125*	.023	.000
Role	Task	-.041	.018	.122
	Group	.151*	.023	.000
	Organization	.084*	.021	.001
Group	Task	-.193*	.024	.000
	Role	-.151*	.023	.000
	Organization	-.067	.027	.079
Organization	Task	-.125*	.023	.000
	Role	-.084*	.021	.001
	Group	.067	.027	.079

*Note:* Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

\*Significant at  $p < .001$

### **Newcomer Learning Scale (NLS)**

Learning during the organization socialization process is critical in facilitating newcomer adjustment. Bauer and Erdogan (2012) contend that the learning of content is at least as important as the process itself. Furthermore, Klein and Heuser (2008) postulate that a critical component of newcomer socialization is actualizing learning across key organizational levels such as the job, workgroup, and organization. Cooper-Thomas' (in press) Newcomer Learning Scale (NLS) is designed to measure newcomer

learning across three domains: role learning, relationships learning, and organizational learning. (H. Cooper-Thomas, personal communication, October 30, 2017).

A multiple regression analysis was conducted on the data gathered from this instrument. Overall knowledge acquisition served as the criterion variable, and sub-scores for each context domain (role, relationships, and organization) served as predictor variables for the purpose of evaluating the effect each independent variable had on overall learning in the role. Additionally, in order to determine the relative importance of each independent variable the researcher also analyzed and reported the standardized beta weights (Huck, 2004).

Assumption tests were performed prior to conducting the regression on the NLS results in order to ensure the validity of the findings. Independence of residuals was verified through a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.853. Linearity between the independent and dependent variables collectively was verified through visual inspection of a scatter plot of the unstandardized predicted values and studentized residuals. Partial regression plots of each independent variable and the dependent variable were also examined and a linear relationship between each was confirmed. Homoscedasticity was established through visual inspection of a plot of the studentized residuals verses the unstandardized predicted values. Multicollinearity was assessed by looking at correlations between the independent variables, none was higher than 0.7. Additionally, tolerance and VIF values were examined and all were within an acceptable range to show the absence of multicollinearity (Laerd Statistics, 2015b).

Normality was assessed through visual inspection of a histogram of the standardized residuals, which showed a fairly normal distribution, as well as through



inspection of a Q-Q plot of the studentized residuals, which showed some deviation from normality. However the decision was made to continue with the analysis due to the fairly large sample size ( $n=110$ ), and the regression's relative robustness to deviations from normality (Laerd Statistics, 2015b). Moreover, when the assumption of normality was retested for with the outliers removed from the model it was met, as the histogram and Q-Q plot both showed a normal distribution of the residuals. Additionally, a Shapiro-Wilk test of normality of the studentized residuals of the re-run analysis was not significant.

Finally, unusually influential points or outliers were investigated through examination of the studentized residuals for values greater than  $\pm 3$  standard deviations. Additionally, Cook's Distances and Leverage Values were computed for each case. In all seven cases were identified as potential outliers. The analysis was rerun to determine if the omission of these cases would have an effect on the findings. The results of the second analysis were not significantly different from what was found in the original analysis thus the findings from the original analysis will be reported (Laerd Statistics, 2015b; Verma, 2016).

Results from the regression analysis showed that the overall model was statistically significant in predicting overall learning score,  $F(3, 106) = 2124155.994$ ,  $P < .001$ ,  $\text{adj. } R^2 = 1.00$ . Furthermore, all three variables, role learning, relationship learning, and organizational learning, were significant predictors of the overall learning score,  $P < .001$ , as shown in table 6 along with regression coefficients and standard errors.

Table 6  
*Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis*

Model	B	Standard Error	Beta
(Constant)	.010	.008	
Role Learning	.316	.001	.401*
Relationship Learning	.367	.002	.370*
Organizational Learning	.316	.002	.363*

\*Significant at  $p < .001$

Although all three independent variables were significant in the overall regression model an examination of the standardized beta weights ( $\beta$ ) shown in table 6 illustrate that role learning is the most predictive of a principal's overall learning ( $\beta = .401$ ), followed by relationship learning ( $\beta = .370$ ), and finally organization learning ( $\beta = .363$ ). This finding is somewhat contradictory to Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) results using a similar measure which showed newcomers perceived to have the most knowledge about the group domain, which would be synonymous with the relationship domain in the measure used in the present study, followed by the task and role domain, and finally the organization.

The findings related to information acquisition within domains across all sources and the regression analysis on principal learning taken in tandem reveal that principals acquire the most information within the task and role domains and believe that this role related knowledge is most important to their overall learning. Moreover, results revealed they acquired a similar amount of information within the group and organization domain, which coalesced with how they perceive this information to contribute to their overall knowledge base.

## Qualitative Results

Initial, focused, and axial coding procedures were utilized to analyze the interview data in order to allow for the most theoretically prevalent themes and categories to emerge (Charmaz, 2014). The initially coded qualitative data resulted in the emergence of thirteen focused codes. Individual code reports were created for these codes. The code reports were then reanalyzed at a deeper interpretative level, which resulted in the materialization of eight salient themes. Each emergent theme and its operational definition within the context of this study appear in table 7 and will be discussed in detail below. Additionally, a visual representation of the salient themes in the qualitative data is presented in figure 5.

Table 7  
*Emergent Themes*

Theme	Operational Definition
Support	Support in adjusting to role from supervisors, coworkers, and staff
Relationships	Building relationships with key stakeholders (students, staff, community)
Role Evolution	How the role has evolved and is understood from initial perceptions
Leadership	How leadership is understood within in role
Culture	Building of school Culture
Information Seeking	Information seeking behaviors undertook by principals
Feedback	Formal and informal feedback mechanisms
Mentor	Formal and Informal mentoring opportunities

## **Support**

Support was a recurring theme found throughout the interview data. A lack of support has been identified as a major challenge for principals to have to overcome (Walker & Qian, 2006). In general principals had the potential to be supported in their role from three sources: supervisors, coworkers, and school staff. Supervisors usually referred to either the assistant superintendent or superintendent, coworkers included other principals in the district, and school staff included teachers and other certified staff located in the school in which the principal was assigned. Although there were a few instances where principals felt unsupported or even sabotaged by a supervisor most participants felt that supervisor support had been pivotal in their adjustment to the role as evidenced by the following quote from one of the study's principals:

This is the first system that I've worked in where I really have no qualms about asking a question, even if I feel like "Oh this is a question they're gonna say #32 should know the answer to that." I really don't, our leadership has created an environment where every single one of the principals help each other. I don't feel like there's a sense of competition or one-upmanship beyond a healthy competition, you know.

Furthermore, the principals interviewed for this study spoke frequently of being supported by other principals during and after the transition process. There were many instances where principals mentioned how daunting and lonely being in charge of a school can be and that developing a professional network of support was pivotal for survival in the role. One principal described their support network as follows:

...we're a tight knit group we communicate a lot we bounce things off each other so you know my happy place would be to pick up a phone and meet with my colleagues. We have monthly meetings and every month there's time on that agenda for us just to network and bounce things off each other and talk about what's working and not working and sharing of ideas. And actually just hopping in my car and going over to their high schools and watching it work whether it's a teaching method or strategy or something like that so we just kind of take care of each other.

Another saw it as a saving grace stating, "That's how I'm orienting my stuff is that I've created relationships with other principals and we talk to each other regularly and if had it not been for that, I think I would be out of there, I think I would be out of here."

Principals also felt that support from school staff was integral in helping them socialize into the role whereas contrarily a lack of support proved to be a difficult impediment to achieving insidership. Principals expressed that support from school staff was often felt in subtle ways. For example one principal explained:

Those sort of things like that mean more to me than anything else. I also have, when I was ... Last year I was the acting principal, and so this year I'm officially the principal, and the last day of school this past school year, when that leaked out and they found out, the teachers had arranged a little surprise party for me, and got me down to the library, and they had a sash and a tiara...

### **Relationships**

Another pertinent theme that emerged from the qualitative data was relationships. Specifically, principals proactively seeking to build relationship with key stakeholders in

the school (students, staff, and community) upon taking on the role. Relationship building has been identified as a valuable proactive behavior in the literature (Saks, Gruman, & Cooper-Thomas, 2011). In fact Reichers (1987) argued that organizational socialization is directly influenced by an individuals willingness to interact with others. Moreover, Ashford and Black (1996) assert that socially based proactive behaviors help newcomers create a situational organizational identity and acquire necessary skills and role behaviors.

Many principals interviewed placed more emphasis on building relationships than any other individual socialization tactic. One principal described it as follows:

Everything's about relationships. I mean, that's always been my focus. I'm a great customer service representative if you will, but the principalship very much is based on relationships, whether it's with your kids, with your parents, with the community, or with the people in power.

Another participant saw it as the key differentiator between a positive and negative result in terms of success in the role:

Relationships is the key to being successful in education, I truly believe that. Now if there was only one program, then we'd all buy the same program, we'd all have valedictorians, salutatorians, and everybody would be blue bloods going to Harvard. But that's not the case.

Principals also saw relationship building as a valuable social exchange. Whereby the interaction serves to aid in building a culture where the school staff member feels valued and supported and the principal receives support and buy into their vision for the school, and is also proactive in shaping their organizational identity. One participant in

describing the importance of establishing relationships early on in one's tenure into the principalship stated:

I do think the relationships, that in order to be a change agent you're gonna...everything is going to be do they trust you? Are you a man of integrity? You can move things much faster if they don't quite understand what you're trying to do, but they'll trust you that you know what you are doing and you're going to move it in the right direction.

### **Role Evolution**

The evolution in understanding of the principal role was another significant theme that arose from the data. As noted in other socialization research (Feldman, 1976; Greenfield, 1985; Louis, 1980) many principals interviewed noticed a stark misalignment between their initial expectations and perceptions of the role and the underlying reality. Louis (1980) described this phenomenon as 'surprise,' which "...represents a difference between an individual's anticipations and subsequent experiences in the new setting" (p. 237). One principal summarized the dichotomy as follows, "But golly, some of the things I deal with on a daily basis, or a weekly basis, or whatever, yeah, no clue. No clue, as far as what an administrator actually did." The most common contrast between the principals' initial role expectations and the reality of the position was that principals' initial perceptions included instructional leadership as the largest part of the role, however many regretfully explained that it unfortunately was unable to maintain in the forefront once they entered the reality of the role. One principal reflected by stating:

I think the biggest change, you know, I wish I could spend much more time in the classroom, my love is curriculum and instruction, integration of technology,

differentiation of curriculum, project based learning that's where my expertise is, I find myself doing very very little of that and more so every year. I'm getting caught into the politics of the job, the politics of communication, I got 2,200 students, I got a community, I got over 180 teachers in the building so I'm more of, I hate to say this, much more of a manager of the organization than a leader and I wish I could flip that upside down...

Another principal was also surprised at the lack of time available to be in classrooms.

She spoke of how she plans to prioritize this part of the role:

I honestly thought I would have a lot more time to get into the classes and do some more instructional leadership than I have. I think, I don't know why I thought that, because none of my principals have ever seemed to have been able to do it either, but I really thought that I would be able to work that and be able to make it happen a lot more than I have. I have new plans for next year. We'll see if I can pull it off, but that is definitely one of my priorities that I would like to spend more time on.

Principals also came to understand the role as more multi-faceted than they had originally thought. Many were surprised by the amount and spectrum of responsibilities and tasks the principal must engage with. Juggling multiple facets of the role contributed to principals feeling a sense of 'ultimate responsibility', which was also found to be the case when Spillane and Lee (2014) studied beginning principals. One participant explained:

When I took over the principal's role, though, not only do you have to deal with instruction, you have to do discipline, you have to do PTA, you have to do



community. If there's an angry parent, you gotta talk to them. You have to talk to the school board members. You have to go downtown. There's so many other things that you have to deal with, that sometimes I equate it to the person that spins the plates on the sticks, and you just gotta make sure that each one of them keeps spinning, and I don't like to necessarily do things like that 'cause I don't feel like I'm giving my full attention to anything. That's probably the most difficult thing, was assuming all of the other hats that the principal has to wear, and making sure that none of the plates fall to the floor.

The realization and acceptance of the multi-faceted nature of the role led to principals having a high degree of comfort with uncertainty. One got the sense that the only certainty they could count on was the fact that there was so much ambiguity in their everyday environment. One principal described the realization as follows:

Wow. I would probably say that I work in controlled chaos every day, but that is actually one of the things that I love about this job, is that you never know what is going to happen. I know that at 7:20 our kids are going to come into the building, we're gonna have breakfast, they're gonna go to class. This is the schedule of things that are going to happen, and that's the same every day, but I literally never know what is gonna walk in the door, from the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Principals also spoke of the fact that their role responsibilities have evolved even more within the past few years in terms of their ubiquity. More specifically, principals explicated that although the principal was always responsible for the safety of the school the seriousness and reality of that facet of the job has taken on heightened importance in light of the fact that school shootings are more prevalent now than ever before.

Additionally, many participants discussed the role extending to having an awareness of their students' online and social media activity and its potential to influence the school community, which is something that has only been added to a principal's radar in recent years. One principal summarized it as follows:

It's in our own schools and we have to spend an awful lot of time staying on top of Twitter accounts and Facebook accounts just to make sure that we keep this building safe. That's added a whole other dimension to this idea that if I don't feel safe then I can't learn; no matter how wealthy you are. So it's those types of things...and we're doing the right thing, but the other issue here typically is you take a look at the profiling of some of these students, ya know locking the door doesn't keep the student away. A majority, a large majority of the time it's the students in the building that have access to the building so locking the door is not going to necessarily prevent the next shooting. So now the focus is really on social emotional awareness, paying real attention... and teaching our teachers to be very very sensitive to the social emotional behaviors of the kids. Who is sitting alone? And who is depressed? Who doesn't have friends? Are they interacting in groups? Are they talking, are they making eye contact with one another? This has added a whole new dimension in the last year and a half.

### **Leadership**

Leadership was another salient theme that emerged from the data. In general principals in the sample focused most on the following three aspects of leadership: distributing responsibility, instructional innovation, and capacity building. Distributed leadership through collaboration was most frequently discussed. Principals often talked

about the need to collaborate with key school personnel in order for forward progress to ensue. Also, many principals talked about the need to distribute the work in order not to drown in the sheer number of demands and facets of the role. When asked about their leadership style one veteran principal responded:

At once the principal was the only influencer, was the final decision maker and I don't, I don't believe we now can survive in that role. This job is much too complex for one person to be able to put their hands on everything. So you have to trust and you have build leadership if you're gonna survive in this job because if you were asked to be in charge of everything and you were the only go to person the job is much much much too large for one person. So the survival instinct is to provide leadership to build leadership to listen, to talk, to role model, to have them make mistakes without risk, without punishment and bring them along because this job is nothing like it was 34 years ago and nothing like it was 10 years ago so you gotta evolve with that.

This focus on distributed leadership through collaboration seems to make sense in light of the fact that proactive relationship building was a top priority upon starting in the role.

Principals also discussed the importance of being the building instructional leader. They elaborated on the need to establish a clear vision of teaching and learning and to help students and staff realize that vision through their presence in the classroom. In fact this was the second most discussed aspect of leadership principals mentioned after collaboration. Upon reflecting upon the priorities of the position one principal stated:

Yeah, so instructional leadership is the most important. And it's something that as I reflect onto my first year, moving to my second year is something that I have to

make a stronger priority. So right now in my brain, today you ask me that question and I would say instructional leadership is the most important part. School leaders unequivocally see themselves as instructional leaders and ranked it as a top priority, yet feel they were not getting into classrooms as much as they should. This creates an interesting dilemma as principals try to establish their identity and adjust to the role.

The third subset of leadership school leaders most identified with was building the capacity of their staff. They saw it as their responsibility to identify and support teachers in the building with leadership potential. One participant described the process in the following way:

I think it's really important to never underestimate what people can do and what people are willing to do for kids. As long as we honor their work, and we find ways to tap into their talents, you can create a really dynamic school, even if resources are not abundant.

It seems that the multi-faceted structure of the principal role demands a diverse approach to leadership. It was evident throughout the interviews that school leaders were utilizing different aspects of leadership depending on the context and specificity of the situation. The more principals experienced the role and were entrenched in the socialization process the more they realized the need for a diverse approach to leadership in order to be successful.

## **Feedback**

Feedback represents another relevant theme from the analysis. Feedback seeking is another form of proactive behavior engaged in during the organizational socialization process (Saks, et al., 2011). Ashford and Cummings (1983) explain:

...when individuals experience uncertainty about either the appropriate behaviors for achieving a goal or how those behaviors may be evaluated within a work setting, they will be motivated to seek feedback... (p. 324).

Principals in the sample tended to look for and receive feedback either formally from a supervisor or informally through their own self-created measures of success. Moreover, feedback quality from supervisors fell into two categories: principals either described the feedback loop with supervisors as helpful to their growth in the role, or negative to their development, mainly due to the feedback not being timely or specific enough. One principal described the importance of this feedback as follows:

My supervisor in the county, I see her once a month in meetings, but in terms of the review that I'm receiving or my evaluation, it's pretty in depth, and we meet throughout the year, we go over my goals, how am I meeting those goals, she does observations of me interacting with my staff and with kids and with parents. There's this ongoing feedback cycle, it's just not an end of the year evaluation meeting.

Another participant looked to more informal feedback mechanisms to gauge success in the role. He stated:

When I look at our parent contact log and all of the parents have been contacted and I don't have to spend hours contacting parents. So there are little things that I

look at, how much teaching and learning is happening... So one of the things that I've been looking at this year is the number of parents who actually come to our school events. Is that number increasing? Is that number decreasing?

### **Mentor**

The importance of having a mentor was also a prevalent finding from the data. Mentors have been recognized as an integral part in the socialization process as a means to enhance the newcomer's rate of adjustment (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Mentoring, both formal and informal, was found to be a key component of the induction process in a recent study by Bengston, et al., (2013) of beginning principal organizational socialization. Principals involved in the present study also recognized the need for mentoring opportunities to support their adjustment to the role. One of the study's principals expressed the importance of having a mentor by saying:

I have been blessed beyond belief to have her mentor and guiding support and suggest and back me off when I needed to be backed off. So she and I have spent a lot of time together and she's always, sometimes behind the scenes and sometimes in the main frame but I always know she will tell me exactly what I need to hear when I need to hear it and the good the bad, the ugly, nothing barred. Some principals interviewed for the study had district or state provided mentors that they worked with in a formal fashion. However, it was far more common for principals to have established informal mentorships, either with a district supervisor, another more experienced principal in the district, or a supervisor they had worked with in the past that they still keep in touch with. The importance of an unofficial mentor was clearly expressed by this principal:

...And then I also had a colleague that I've kind of considered a mentor the whole time I've been here in (names district), and so that colleague was more of the ... This is the person I would call and let off steam, and just kind of, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, I can't believe this is happening!"

### **Information Seeking**

Information seeking was found to be another salient theme that emerged from the qualitative data. Principals enter into an environment where a plethora of information needs to be attained and processed. This includes everything from the past school achievement results to prior challenges and successes that have shaped the school's culture, to everything in between. Watching was found to be the most utilized information seeking tactic by principals just starting in a school. This finding comports with past research, which found that newcomers relied on monitoring more than other methods of information acquisition (Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

Principals talked about being a keen observer when first entering the role in order to get a complete and accurate understanding of the inner workings and culture of the school before looking to implement any large changes or innovations. One principal described how they created a schedule early on to aid in this process:

Yeah, it's so interesting. I tried at the beginning of the school year especially I managed to work it so that I am in every lunch shift of the different teacher teams, not all in one day. Just how you can observe how people interact socially when it's not a pressure cooker situation like eating lunch. The nuances that you pick up on in terms of who's seen as a leader, plus you have the preexisting grade level or department chairs, you can see who the power players are pretty fast.

The principals' other primary mode of information seeking was inquiry, which involves directly asking another person in the organization for information (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Principals were most reliant on coworkers in the school (i.e. teachers and other staff) to provide them with information on the culture and inner workings of the school. One principal explained:

So, it's pretty bizarre, but anyway, so, but of course you don't know that going in, and when I went in, and I started, and I just started talking to people, and started talking to the veteran teachers to kind of get a feel. That's how you kind of transition, and then you kind of say, how are things? What works? What doesn't? How are people feeling? And all that good stuff, and you can't just barge in there and start saying, well, we're going to do this, this, and this, because you really don't know, you know?

Principals would then use this information to focus their efforts, set goals, and develop and implement their action plan. This can be categorized as the utilization of another proactive behavior, namely trying or experimentation with different behaviors in order to learn about the role and establish their identity (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Saks & Ashforth, 1996). One principal put it as follows:

I sat down and I really created what I wanted as a vision for the school and where I wanted to take it and where I thought it could be. That was kind of my touchstone all year. I would go back to that and see how I was doing and try to make decisions based on those ideas.



## Culture

Culture, particularly in reference to the school identity, represents another emergent theme from the data. Principals in the study talked frequently about the importance of establishing and building the school culture as a top priority of the role. In fact this idea permeates throughout many of the other themes discussed above including relationship building, a collaborative approach to leadership, information seeking in terms of inquiry, and informal feedback mechanisms. One principal summed it up as follows, “I think every school has its own culture and I think we're responsible as principals to contribute to the culture and learn the culture and grow the culture...”

Another aspect to this finding is that it was fairly evident that the principal's identity was tied to the school's culture, so for them building and growing the culture upon their arrival into the role was how they established their identity as principals. One principal in discussing how she established her identity as a leader explained:

That is a lot of the team building, and the staff culture and climate, and that sort of thing. We do a lot of stuff for them, and obviously I brought that in when I came in as the assistant principal, and I think they could see that I was genuine, and that I really was interested in taking care of them. I think that part has definitely made it a lot easier for me, as far as them seeing that I definitely want the best for them, I want the best for our kids, and once you have that, I think it's a lot easier to lead.

Principals talked about establishing their identity through specific culture building processes or events such as in the above quote, however they also did so in a less direct manner through the changes and innovations they brought to the school during their tenure as leader. Any decision a leader makes affects the culture of the organization and

aids in shaping their identity among their subordinates. Although there was great variability among the specific changes to the school principals made, there was great consistency in terms of the fact that every principal changed or altered the operation of the school they were in charge of in some fashion. One principal reflected upon a certain instance in route to establishing his identity with staff:

You know, we've been hearing for years and years that we can't do that. Why is it any different with you?" And I was ... I think I was 33 years old at the time, this teacher is early 50s. And I said, "Well, I understand what you're saying, but the difference is you can expect me to hold you accountable for it." And that's all it took. They needed to believe that there was somebody that was going to have a higher standard.

Although a principal's primary identity was linked to the culture of the school, they also talked about being perceived differently with in different work groups. This became evident as principals would tend to vary their description of how others perceived them depending upon if they were talking about their supervisors, principal colleagues, or school staff. This finding is consistent with one of the tenets of social identity theory which contends that organizational members may develop many different social identities with an organization as individuals may see themselves as belonging to a job class, work group, department, division, etc. (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Additionally, the multi-faceted nature of the role also made for principals to discuss the many sub-identities they portray in carrying out their duties. One principal explains, "I would say I'm a counselor, I'm a bus driver now, I'm a safety consultant, I'm a ... I'm all kinds of things."

Crow (2006) suggested that principals, for the most part, were socialized with

little attention paid to what could be learned from their teaching experiences. Other findings suggest that principals can struggle with letting go of their teacher identity once assuming an administrative role (Brown-Ferrigno, 2003). However, this study's findings were analogous to those of Spillane and Lee (2014) who found that new principals bring dispositions and knowledge from their experiences as classroom teachers that influence their understanding of the role of a principal. One principal in describing how she has merged the two identities stated:

Oh. Well, my thing was, I never, in a million years, would've thought I was gonna go into administration. I was perfectly content in the classroom. I loved it, I loved being with the kids, and I think that's the biggest thing that has impacted me. Even as I moved into administration, I was really nervous about not having that close contact with kids, but you can still do that in administration, and I've tried very hard to make sure that I've maintained close contact with kids.

Another administrator explained that holding on to a piece of her teacher identity was part of her beliefs about the role. She stated:

I think school leadership is really about leadership. And you have to be a role model, you have to be a teacher. You can't just become an administrator and forget that you were a teacher. So I took two vows. One, when I became a teacher, I would never treat students the way I was treated. And two, when I became an administrator, I would never treat teachers the way I was treated.

Social Identity theory (Hogg & Terry, 2000) and the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) both assert that individuals have a need to identify with a group. Thus in the context of organizational socialization individuals strive to create an organizational

identity that will allow them to achieve insider status. Almost every principal in the study felt that they had achieved insider status within their first three years in the role, with a large majority feeling it happened by the end of their first year. For the most part this path to 'insidership' was described as a gradual process of small moments and interactions. One principal described it in the following way:

I think there are little instances that happen that when you have developed a close enough relationship that you know what's going on in and outside of school. It may be picking up on the nuances of something going on with a teacher, and you have gotten to know them well enough or you're paying attention to the fact that your secretary is super snarky today. You've taken the time to ask is there anything I can do to help you? You know that you are established when teachers are asking you what do you think about this? When you walk into a classroom and the teacher is not worried that you're there, but they're genuinely pleased that you've come in to see what their students are doing.

Still other maintained that although it was mostly a gradual process there was a defining moment, however small, that really served to emphasize the fact that they belonged. One principal reflected on the following event:

It's kind of a gradual thing, but it takes something significant like that for the point to be driven home. The realtor that we used when I first came to (names town) was a retired teacher from the building. And he would say things like, "You know, you have the most important job in town." And he was great. Matter of fact he worked with us for over a year, about three years, before we found a place. And at one point he was helping us try to find rentals and I said, "Steve, you're not

getting anything out of this, why are you giving me your time?" And he says,  
"#46, your my principal, man.

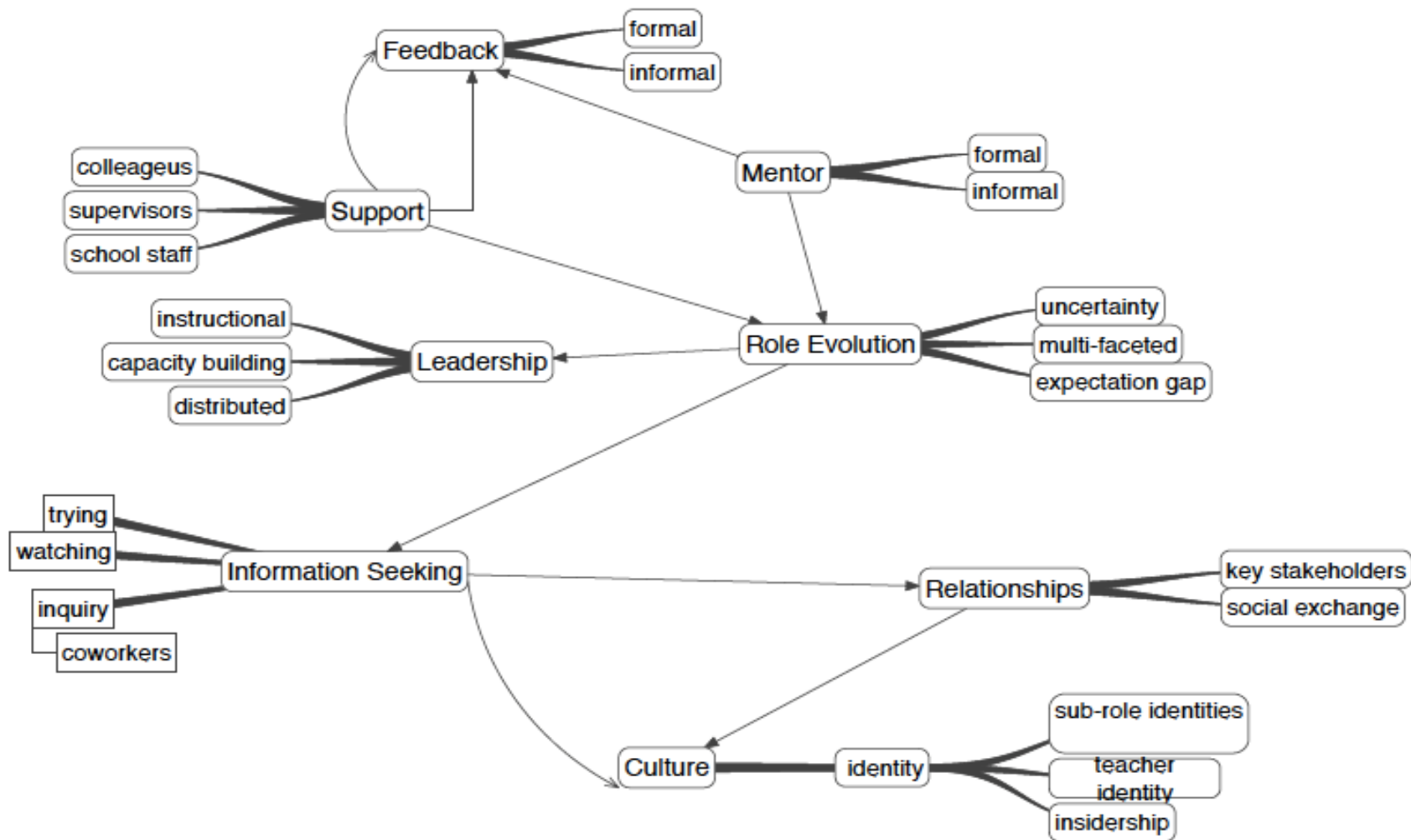


Figure 5. Mind map of emergent themes. Large nodes represent salient themes and sub-themes are depicted via the branches

## **Summary**

In summary principals reflecting on their socialization experiences felt that receiving support from supervisors as well as their principal colleagues was critical in facilitating a successful role adjustment. Relatedly, they expressed a need for both formal and informal mentorship opportunities in order to aid them in navigating the diverse demands of the role. These support mechanisms seemed especially important since there was a disconnect between their expectations of the role and the realities of the modern day principal. In general principals lamented over the fact that they did not have enough time to provide the instructional leadership they wanted to or thought they would be able to, due to the magnitude of the role in terms of the amount of tasks and responsibilities they were accountable for. Moreover, principals felt support and mentoring opportunities were critical due to the ambiguity of the role. It was clear that the role demanded a high level of 'comfort with uncertainty' due to the unpredictability of the principal's schedule.

Principals seemed to mostly rely on observing, inquiry, and relationship building as a means to reduce some of the uncertainty surrounding the role and its function upon arriving at the school they were tasked to lead. Principals engaged in great amounts of watching upon their arrival in order to get a sense of the inner workings of the school. Additionally, they would inquire about the strengths and weaknesses of the operation from their staff. Principals also expounded upon how important it was to begin to build positive relationships with staff, parents, and students as soon as possible. Principals felt relationship building was the most effective way to grow the culture of the school. They saw it as a means of social exchange whereby the interaction aids in building a culture where the school staff member or parent

feels respected and supported and the principal receives the staff members or parents backing as they implement their vision.

Principals' proactive building of relationships also related to how they perceived themselves as building leaders. Being a collaborative leader who distributed responsibility amongst their staff was an important facet of how principals in the study described themselves. This distributed leadership style served to aid in building the capacity of teacher leaders whom the principal felt could be impactful in moving the organization forward as well as to relieve the principal of some of the inordinate amount of responsibilities placed on them. Moreover, although principals identified instructional leadership as a top priority, most admitted they could not get into classrooms and observe and coach teachers nearly as much as they should due to the other demands of the role that take up large amounts of their time.

Principals relied on establishing relationships and collaborating with staff as a means to build or maintain a positive culture within the school. The principal's identity in the role seemed to evolve with the culture, meaning principals served to establish their identity in the role through their leadership style, relationships, and the changes and innovations they implemented, all of which had a direct impact on the building culture. Furthermore, although a principal's primary identity was linked to the culture of the school, they also talked about being perceived differently within different work groups. Namely, they identified differently among supervisors, principal colleagues, or school staff as well as through various sub-identities, which were subsumed under their larger organizational identity as the school leader. Principals also tended to be cognizant of their previous identity as a teacher, which influenced their understanding of and actions in the role of a principal. School leaders were



also inclined to describe the path to organizational insidership as a gradual process that occurs organically over the course of their first year or so in the role.

### **Data Merging**

Two forms of data were collected and analyzed in this mixed methods study. Although the survey and interview data vary in utility, both generally offered similar findings, which serve to strengthen the validity and credibility of the study's conclusions. Furthermore, merging the two forms of data provides a more complete picture of the individual socialization process as it allows for an understanding of not only what principals did to facilitate their socialization, but also how they did it. The merged results are presented under the headings of the two overarching research questions, which framed the study

#### **How do K-12 principals perceive and make sense of the process of organizational socialization?**

The survey results revealed that the two information seeking behaviors most utilized by principals are watching and trying. This finding is corroborated by the qualitative data, which found that principals rely heavily on observation upon organizational entry, and then later use this and other gathered information to set goals and develop and implement their action plan as a form of trying or experimentation. Additionally, the survey data revealed that coworkers were utilized as a source of information gathering to a greater extent than supervisors across domain. This finding seemed to be reaffirmed in the interview data where principals discussed speaking with school staff either in groups or individually to ascertain critical information about the building when first assuming the principalship.

The survey data also disclosed that principals acquired information within the task and

role domains significantly more than either the group or organization domains, which translated to their belief that they had learned more about the role than how to work together with colleagues or specific organizational norms and beliefs. Relatedly, a prominent theme that emerged from the interview data was role evolution, which shed light on how principals evolved within the role from their initial expectations prior to organization entry through to their perceptions of themselves as full-fledged organizational insiders.

Furthermore, although relationship learning was not the most significant predictor to overall learning it was still a statistically significant variable in the regression model. The interview data served to illuminate how principals engaged in learning within this domain, as relationship building was one of the means principals use to seek pertinent organizational information to build culture and establish a positive identity in the role.

Moreover, the quantitative analysis revealed that principals rely on trying more than any other information seeking behavior to learn about their role and its associated tasks. The interview data served to add some breadth to this finding as many of the participants described the principalship as a solitary role. Thus it makes sense that principals would rely greatly on experimentation when learning about the role, as they are the only one in the role at their respective school. Although supervisors may provide support and guidance along the way they are not in the building regularly. The same can be said for fellow principals or mentors which explains why trying was used significantly more than watching to gather information in the role and task domains. Although coworkers, in the form of school staff, are in the building daily with the principal they are ill equipped to provide the principal with relevant information regarding specific tasks or role duties and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the quantitative analysis revealed that principals sought information

regarding their tasks and role significantly more than they did the group and organizational domains across sources. However, the qualitative findings contrasted with this conclusion as participants overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of gathering information about the organizational culture and overall school environment early on in their tenure. An explanation for this finding could be that the principal's role identity is so tied to the school culture that when they are seeking information about the culture of the school they are simultaneously doing so in regards to their role in terms of what work needs to be done in order to achieve their overall vision, thus framing their role identity.

**Does The Need to Belong, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Social Identity Theory serve as an accurate theoretical foundation for the organizational socialization of K-12 principals?**

The qualitative and quantitative results taken in tandem show strong support for the four-theory theoretical framework proposed by (Chaoi, 2012) and tested in this study. Uncertainty reduction has been identified as a catalyst for high levels of proactivity in the socialization process (Ashford & Nurmohamed, 2012 & Chaoi, 2012). Relatedly, the high levels of uncertainty surrounding principals in this study served as a stimulus for why principals engaged in proactive behaviors throughout their socialization process. The qualitative findings highlight that principals must cope with great amounts of uncertainty almost immediately upon entering the role as many reported a contrast between their initial role perceptions and the underlying reality.

Principals interviewed discussed how the high level of uncertainty they faced continued even after the initial shock of what the principalship actually entailed subsided. This was due to the fact that the role itself was unpredictable in the sense that they never

knew what a given day was going to bring and often they were sidetracked from accomplishing whatever tasks they had prioritized to accomplish in a given time period. Principals were also cognizant of the fact that the role was ever evolving in response to societal factors. Administrators in this study referenced school violence and student social media use as two examples of how the responsibilities and priorities of their role as the school leader have changed in recent years, which contributed to their feelings of uncertainty.

The need to belong was also useful in understanding the level of proactivity principals exhibited in their own socialization. Moreover, it was helpful in explicating why principals utilized the proactive behaviors they did. For instance the quantitative findings showed that principals relied on coworkers to a significantly greater extent than supervisors as a source of information in the group domain. The qualitative data added breadth to this outcome as it showed relationship building to be a top priority when entering the principal role. These findings comport with the two main tenets of the need to belong. More specifically, the need requires frequent interpersonal actions with specific individuals and groups. Additionally, it has been hypothesized that this need for belonging will stimulate an individual to seek out the development of interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Furthermore, the theory proposes that if the need is fulfilled through group membership, the individual will be highly motivated to seek out positive interactions with group members (Chaoi, 2012; Hornsey & Jetten, 2004).

Immense amounts of uncertainty and a budding need to belong to the school community and establish a positive identity in the organization led principals to exhibit high amounts of proactivity towards their own socialization. Chaoi (2012) explicates, “Social exchange theory provides a general framework that can explain how a newcomer can reduce

uncertainty and form an attachment to a group or organization” (p. 585). Furthermore, according to symbolic interactionism social exchanges stimulate the forming of relationships from which one’s social identity within a particular group is formed (Reichers, 1987).

The SIAQ data showed that principals sought information from potential sources differentially. Evaluating the perceived value of the information compared to its perceived cost and utilizing different sources accordingly is consistent with social exchange theory and current models of information seeking (Morrison, 2002a). Furthermore, the SIAQ results also revealed that principals sought the most information within the task and role domains while the NLS results showed role related learning was most predictive to a principal’s perceived overall knowledge, thus in terms of social exchange principals perceived this type of information to have the greatest value.

The qualitative results revealed that principals engage in a variety of proactive behaviors during the organizational socialization process that can be understood through the lens of social exchange theory including: information seeking through inquiry, relationship building, and distributing leadership responsibilities through collaboration. All of these behaviors involve interpersonal interactions, which are mutually beneficial to the parties involved. Principals seek to grow the school culture, establish a positive social identity, receive buy in and support for their vision, and relieve some of the burden they carry due to the large amount of responsibility they endure. In turn school staff members stand to gain recognition, increased self-efficacy, and increased responsibility and influence.

Social identities within an organization are essential in shaping the affect and behavior of an employee (Chaoi, 2012). The results of this study highlight the importance of the principal’s identity in the role in influencing not only their own behaviors, but in shaping the

culture of the school as a whole. The qualitative results show as principals engaged in identity work as a result of their leadership style, relationships, and changes and innovations to the school they were simultaneously impacting the school culture. Additionally, a majority of principals in the sample acknowledged an identity conflict upon first becoming an administrator as they felt they did not have as much of an opportunity as they thought for instructional leadership. This contrast was a source of considerable uncertainty for principals when starting in the role and seemed to have been at least part of the stimulus for the development of another component of their identity, that of a collaborative leader who distributes responsibility. One of the reasons principals ascribed to this philosophy was that they saw as a way to ease some of their burden in terms of the multitude of role demands they faced, which provided them with more time to focus on what they saw as the priorities of the role, including instructional leadership. This makes sense when framed within social identity theory as Hogg and Terry (2000) assert that the need to reduce uncertainty is more prevalent than other potential motives in building an organizational identity.

Furthermore, the results revealed that the multi-faceted nature of the role made it necessary for principals to develop many sub identities shaped by the various work groups and contexts they experienced. For example, the interview data revealed that principals would generally vary how they felt others would describe them depending on if they were talking about supervisors, fellow administrators, or school staff. Principals also talked about having to wear many hats due to the multiple facets of the role, which also led to the formation of role specific sub identities. The responsiveness and adaptation of one's social identity to varying contexts is recognized as a central feature of social identity theory (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Finally, the qualitative data showed that principals still valued their teacher

selves and worked to merge the most salient parts of this old identity within their current administrator identity. Social identity Theory (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001) provides a framework for these findings, which taken in aggregate show a principal's identity to be made up of many context driven micro identities.

## **Chapter V: CONCLUSIONS**

### **Summary of the Study**

The demand for K-12 principals is on the rise (NASSP, 2017), however the school principal turnover rate is also quite high (Briggs, et al., 2013). The process of principals being effectively socialized into the role is worthy of investigation since there is ample empirical evidence, which supports how essential the principal is in facilitating school improvement (Lytle, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; May & Supovitz, 2011; Robisnon, et al., 2008). However, the organizational socialization of principals is far from a saturated topic in the literature (Heck, 1995; Stevenson, 2006; Steyn, 2013).

Newcomer proactivity is a critical component of the organizational socialization process (Morrison, 1993, Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, Reichers, 1987). Individual socialization tactics can contribute to increased newcomer learning, which has been shown to be related to a multitude of socialization adjustment variables (Bauer and Erdogan, 2012). The organizational socialization of school leaders poses a unique dilemma, as principals need to successfully integrate themselves within the organization setting while simultaneously facilitating cultural and instructional improvement (Hart, 1993).

This mixed methods study examined the proactive role principals play in facilitating their own organizational socialization. Data collected from two quantitative measures and 14 semi-structured interviews provided insight into how and from whom principals seek information, as well as the other proactive behaviors principals employ to aid in making sense of their roles, work group, and overall organizational culture as they engage on a path to insidership. Furthermore, a never before tested four theory framework was utilized as the study's conceptual foundation in order to determine if (the need to belong, uncertainty



reduction theory, social exchange theory, and social identity theory) is an accurate theoretical foundation for the organizational socialization experiences of K-12 principals.

The research questions used to frame the study are as follows:

Overarching:

1. How do K-12 principals perceive and make sense of the process of organizational socialization?
2. Does The Need to Belong, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Social Identity Theory serve as an accurate theoretical foundation for the organizational socialization of K-12 principals?

Quantitative:

1. Is there a difference in principal information acquisition among different organizational sources?
2. Is there a difference in principal information acquisition within contextual domains?
3. Does contextual domain have an influence on which sources principals use to acquire information?
4. Which types of domain specific learning contribute the most to a K-12 principal's overall sense of knowledge?

Qualitative:

1. What role do K-12 principals play in their organizational socialization?

## **Discussion of Results**

The following section will include a separate discussion of the qualitative and quantitative results followed by a discussion of the integrated meta-inferences (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009) derived from the merging of the quantitative and qualitative results. The merged results are presented within the four-theory framework used as the theoretical foundation of the study. The meta-inferences in aggregate will serve to provide clarity to the overarching questions used to frame the study.

## **Discussion of Quantitative Results**

The quantitative instruments used in the study were designed to elicit principal information seeking behavior as well as how the acquiring of domain specific information contributed to their perception of overall learning. Principals in this study relied on different sources depending on the type of information they were seeking. More specifically, in the task and role domain trying was used most followed by watching. This finding makes sense for K-12 principals, as they are the only one in their position in their respective building. This environmental constraint limits the extent to which they might rely on monitoring other principals to gain information regarding the role. Moreover, principals are usually supervised by their assistant superintendents and superintendents who are also not in the building regularly, making it harder perhaps to rely heavily upon them for role or task related information.

When examining principal information acquisition tendencies within the group domain watching was relied on to a greater extent than trying and both were relied on more than the other sources. This finding is further clarified when examined alongside the interview data. A heavy majority of the principals interviewed talked about the importance of observing early on in one's tenure in order to gather informational and learn about the organizational culture. Principals also talked about the importance of relationship building, which can be seen as a type of trying or experimentation, which was the second most relied upon information source within the group domain.

The quantitative results also highlighted the fact that principals relied on watching and trying more than any other information seeking source across domain. This reliance on non-interpersonal sources over the personal sources of coworkers and supervisors might again

circle back to the constraints of the role. Namely, principals must rely on trial and error and observation to gather most of the information they require as opportunities to obtain this information from others are limited due to the organizational structure (i.e. one principal per school). Additionally, it should be noted that principals in this study relied on coworkers more than supervisors to gather domain specific information. This finding seems practical as coworkers include those at the same level or lower so even though principals may have had less opportunity to access pertinent information from their fellow principals they could and did utilize their school staff.

School leaders acquired information within the task and role domains significantly more than either the group or organization domains. This finding is reasonable when examined in tandem with the qualitative results. Principals talked a lot about the enormity of the role. Many were shocked by what being the principal entailed and felt their spectrum of responsibilities was vast. Therefore, it would seem to make sense that principals were most interested in task and role related information in order to reduce uncertainty and facilitate role related learning.

Principals perceived their learning regarding the role to be most influential to their overall sense of knowledge. This makes sense due the fact that they acquired the most information in the task and role domains due to their overall feelings about the complexity of the role. Principals also perceived relationship and organizational learning to be important to their overall knowledge base. The qualitative results add breadth to this finding as principals focused on building relationships early on in their tenure in order to grow a positive school culture.

## **Discussion of Qualitative Results**

Overall, results from this study show that principals take a very proactive role in their own socialization. They do this through the utilization of a variety of proactive behaviors, which as the quantitative results confirm includes information seeking. This finding is consistent with the literature on newcomer proactivity in that it seems that neophytes who use one kind of proactive behavior tend to use others as well (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012). In particular, principals engaged in relationship building, feedback seeking, and information seeking primarily through watching, trying, and inquiry to facilitate their adjustment.

Relationship building was one of the top proactive behaviors principals engaged in. Principals repeatedly expressed the importance of establishing positive relationships with staff. It was seen as a top priority upon organizational entry. Participants viewed it as high impact individual socialization tactic as developing positive relationships facilitated the development of a positive social identity and gradual path to insidership. Moreover, relationship building was seen as a key mechanism to growing the school culture as well as a means of creating opportunities for principals to distribute some of their responsibilities to trusted insiders.

Although all principals received some type and degree of formal feedback from supervisors most felt the informal feedback they received from school staff, principal colleagues, or through their own analysis of their impact proved to be much more beneficial. Furthermore, what constituted informal feedback took many forms. It included things like staff survey responses, or advice from an administrator colleague or informal mentor. However, it also included things like parent attendance at school events, improvement in observations for teachers the principal coached, and level of collaboration amongst the staff.

Inconsistent or vague were the primary reasons given from the principals who did describe the feedback they received from supervisors as unhelpful.

Information seeking was another proactive behavior that emerged from the interview data. This finding proved to add some breadth to the quantitative data, which showed that principals primarily sought information from watching and trying. Principals when first starting in a school utilized watching most often. Principals would also utilize inquiry as a means to gather information while continuing to engage in monitoring behavior. They would predominantly talk to school staff to get a sense of the procedures, beliefs, and culture of the school. Once they felt they had acquired enough information to have an understanding of the culture and operations of the building they would shift to more of a hands on form of information seeking that included gathering data and feedback on their own goals and action plan as they learned about and adjusted to the role.

### **Discussion of Merged Results**

Overall, the four-theory framework originally proposed by (Chaoi, 2012) to make sense of the organizational socialization process was strongly supported by the results of this study. Principals faced a tremendous amount of uncertainty upon entering the role, which remained intense even after the initial entry period due to the ambiguity of the role itself. Moreover, school leaders strove to gain acceptance as an organizational insider despite the solitude of the role. Thus uncertainty reduction theory and the need to belong, the two need theories in the framework, can be used to explain why the organizational socialization process is a critical factor in the potential success or failure of a school principal (Chaoi, 2012). Additionally, K-12 principals engaged in several exchange based proactive behaviors in order to reduce said uncertainty and form positive relationships within the organization. The

optimal result sought from these exchanges was to achieve insider status through the development of a positive role identity in order to grow the culture of the school and ultimately improve teaching and learning. Therefore social exchange theory can be used to explain how principals facilitated their organizational socialization and social identity theory provides a framework for the importance of the principal socialization process (Chaoi, 2012). The following section will provide detailed conclusions regarding how parts of the principal organizational socialization process can be framed within each theory.

### **Uncertainty Reduction Theory**

Principals experienced large amounts of uncertainty in their roles. This feeling of surprise began immediately upon assuming the role as most principals in the study noted a blatant contrast between their initial perceptions of the role and what they actually experienced. Overall, the study's participants did not realize the diversity and sheer volume of tasks the role entailed. Many principals talked about how they had no idea at all of the things a principal is responsible for prior to being in the role. School leaders also experienced general uncertainties that come with the territory when assuming a new role and entering a new organization. This included things such as not knowing the school or district staff, not knowing organizational specific procedures both at the school and district level, and not having understanding of the district and school history that served to shape the current culture of both entities.

Principals also talked about the fact that the role itself is one wrought with ambiguity even after they assuaged the initial uncertainties that come with entering a new role in a new organization. This was evident when principals spoke of not really being able to plan their day, as they never knew what they may have to deal with, or that they are often side-tracked

from what they set out to accomplish in a day, week, month, etc. Moreover, the constant evolution of the role also contributed to the uncertainty principals must endure. For instance many administrators discussed how the recent amplification in school shootings and violence has changed the parameters of the principal's role. This was also discussed within the context of the current social media era, as school leaders need to have awareness and expertise in dealing with issues such as cyber-bullying. These events have in some cases shifted how principals define their role and its related priorities, which results in contributing to the aura of uncertainty that seems to be attached to the role.

Thus it is clear that principals enter the role with a defined need to reduce the uncertainty that accompanies it. Principals face uncertainty from many angles including: misaligned role expectation, general uncertainty that accompanies a role and organizational transition, and specific uncertainties unique to the principalship and its political ties. However, as noted above, the principalship itself is a multi-faceted role that needs to function in the face of constant uncertainty. Thus it seems that although entering into a principalship is contingent on dealing with high levels of uncertainty that create a need for individual proactivity, principals also must learn to be comfortable with and even strive in spite of high degrees of ambiguity in order to be successful school leaders.

### **The Need to Belong**

School principals are unique in that they need to work to become organizational insiders while simultaneously improving the culture and strengthening the identity of the organization they are attempting to infiltrate (Hart, 1993). A prevalent finding in the study was principals' need for support from supervisors, fellow principals, and school staff as they

adjusted to their new roles. Organizational support can be seen as sign that one has achieved or is at least on a path to reaching full-fledged group membership.

Although principals' relationship building behavior will later be discussed within the context of social exchange, it can simultaneously be viewed as evidence of a need for organizational belonging. Building positive relationships, particularly among school staff, was critical in part in establishing a positive identity within the work group. Developing a positive social identity was essential for principals as they worked to gain insider status. Almost every principal in the study felt that they had achieved insider status, with the path to 'insidership' described as a gradual process of small moments and interactions. This need to identify with the group and become an insider is a key edict of the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hogg & Terry, 2000).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange was the primary means in which principals acquired pertinent task, role, group, and organizational information as well as how they enacted the repertoire of proactive behaviors they utilized to facilitate their socialization. A key finding in the study was that principals are fairly strategic in deciding how and from what source they seek information. In other words they rely on potential sources of information differentially, depending on the type of information they are seeking. This finding is consistent with Morrison's (2002a) theory of information seeking, which embodies the key principal of social exchange theory, namely an individual will not give up more to acquire a specific type of information (cost) than they perceive its to return to be in value (profit). Moreover, overall principals found non-personal information sources (i.e. watching and trying) to be of greater value than more personal sources (i.e. supervisors and coworkers). One could hypothesize



that this is due to principals perceiving non-personal sources to produce information of greater value, yet conversely one might postulate that principals perceived gaining information from non-personal sources to be of lower cost. This study presents a third option, which is that due to the organizational structure of a school system and the role itself, principals may seek information from predominately non-interpersonal sources out of necessity due to the lack of regular access to more personal sources.

Of the personal sources available to school principals, coworkers were relied on to a greater extent than supervisors. Additionally, the main way principals would gather organizational information from the school staff was through inquiry, which involves directly asking another person in the organization for information (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Using inquiry based tactics to gather pertinent information represents another mode of social exchange engaged in by school principals. School staff stands to gain the opportunity to have their voice heard, feel valued, and shape the direction of the school based on the information they give. On the other hand, school principals acquire the information they wanted as they continue to adjust to their new role and environment.

School leaders also saw relationship building as a valuable medium of social exchange. In aggregate principals named relationship building, specifically with school staff, as a top priority upon organizational entry. The social exchange involved in the relationship building process has the potential to be mutually beneficial to both parties. The principal is seeking to benefit from the exchange by creating a positive organizational identity, which is needed to become an organizational insider as well as receiving the support from the school staff member needed to enact their organizational vision. In turn, the staff member is gaining a sense of value and support from their new boss and in certain cases may be given increased

responsibility or additional prestige if the exchange results in the principal identifying them as a potential teacher leader.

A collaborative leadership style can also be viewed through the lens of social exchange when examining how principals facilitate their own socialization. Principals in the study made mention often to being a collaborative leader who distributes responsibility among staff. The principal gains assistance from the teacher leader in fulfilling the demands of the role as many principals talked about the need to distribute leadership tasks in order not to drown in the vastness of the role. Furthermore, as a result of the exchange a school staff member may perceive to have increased their organizational influence, increased their sense of self-efficacy, or set him or her self up for potential organizational advancement.

### **Social Identity Theory**

Prior research has shown that socially based proactive behaviors help newcomers create a situational organizational identity and acquire necessary skills and role behaviors (Ashford & Black, 1996). Moreover, establishing a role identity is a vital component of the principal socialization process (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Overall principals seemed to struggle initially in shaping their identity, as there was a divergence between their perceived identity of the principal and the reality of the role. The primary identity principals associated with the role prior to their first principalship was that of instructional leader. This was mainly due to the fact that most school leaders' initial understanding of the role included a lot more time in classrooms working with teachers on improving instruction than what turned out to be feasible once they had begun in the role. Many principals expressed that the enormity of the role and all the other tasks it entails makes it difficult to give the attention to being an instructional leader that the role demands. This role ambiguity has been found in other

studies of principal role identity. For instance, both Spillane et al. (2015) and Grodzki (2011) reported that beginning principals experienced frustration and stress due to the competing administrative and instructional facets of the job.

This study builds on those prior findings as it was found that all principals in the sample ranked instructional leadership as one of the top priorities of the role and most identified as an instructional leader. Thus it appears that the seemingly infinite facets of the principal's role make focusing on identified priorities a challenge. Nevertheless, it remains interesting that although principals for the most part feel they are not able to concentrate enough on instruction, they still identify it as a priority and most identified instructional leadership as part of their leadership profile. Social identity theory provides a possible explanation for this. Ashford and Mael (1989) posit that although individuals may subscribe to numerous identities within an organization they tend to identify themselves in terms of their most salient social identity. This identity conflict also seems to be responsible in part for the emergence of another aspect of a principal's role identity, that of a collaborative leader. Many principals discussed being a collaborative leader as necessary in order to distribute some of their leadership tasks and responsibilities amongst identified teacher leaders, which allowed them more time to focus on what they felt were the most important aspects of the role, including instructional leadership.

Another finding afforded by the results of the study was the importance of the school culture in reference to the principal's organizational identity. Over time the principal's identity was forged in response to the school culture, so for them impacting and growing the culture upon their arrival into the role was how they established their identity as principals. This was evident as every principal at some point in their tenure made changes to the school

to reflect their educational beliefs and values. Furthermore, how principals identified as leaders was reflected in their action plans. Thus as social identity theory suggests principals were deliberate in working to create a situated identity in their new role (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Additionally, The link between the principal's organizational identity and growing the school culture can also be used to help explain why distributing leadership through collaboration was identified as a priority for most principals.

While a principal's most prominent identity was interrelated to the school culture and teaching and learning, principals in the sample also discussed a myriad of sub-identities they ascribed to the role. The multi-dimensional nature of the principalship demands that school leaders enact various sub-identities that are more niche specific than their more salient selves. Principals' multiple role identities were also supported by the fact that most participants would vary their description of how others perceived them depending upon if they were talking about their supervisors, principal colleagues, or school staff.

Furthermore, it was found that a principal's old identity as a teacher influences how they understand their new role as a school leader. Many interviewed were adamant that a principal can never forget that they were once a teacher and that this realization should play a part in each decision made as an administrator. These findings are consistent with the tenets of social identity theory, as the influence of context on the enactment of a specific social identity has been shown to be pivotal (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Moreover, a principal's social identity actually consisting of many smaller context specific sub-identities is also consistent with the theory (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001).

## Conclusions

The present study provides empirical support for Chaoi's (2012) four-theory framework (uncertainty reduction theory, the need to belong, social Exchange theory, and social identity theory) for organizational socialization. More specifically, this study supports its applicability in explaining the individual socialization process of K-12 principals. The quantitative instruments utilize well established constructs from the organizational socialization literature, were implemented with a fairly large sample size, and were analyzed using appropriate statistical analysis techniques, all of which increased the validity and reliability of the study's findings. The qualitative interviews allowed for the collection of thick rich data which added depth to the quantitative findings by answering the how and why questions. The mixed methods design of the study allowed for the utilization of both quantitative and qualitative research questions, research methods, and data collection and analysis procedures, which supported the emergence of integrated meta inferences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009) which allowed for the development of a more representative model of the individual socialization process of K-12 principals.

Furthermore, the results of the study reveal principal organizational socialization to be a dynamic process initiated by large amounts of uncertainty and a need to belong. Various forms of proactive behaviors enacted through episodes of social exchange help the school leader to create a positive social identity within the organization. Other inputs affecting the principal socialization process include the level of support they receive from supervisors and coworkers as well as context specific factors such as the stability of district leadership and school specific events. Figure 6 provides a conceptual model of the individual socialization process of the modern day principal and is expounded upon below.

Principals face a considerable amount of uncertainty upon assuming the role of school leader. It begins with a sense of shock and a feeling of being overwhelmed initiated by the divergence between the principal's perceptions of the job prior to organizational entry and what turns out to be the reality. Additionally, as in any socialization event, the unfamiliarity of the newcomer with organizational procedures, processes, and culture also contributes to their mounting uncertainty. As principals begin to make sense of the role they continue to encounter uncertainty as they realize the enormity of their task volume and the unpredictability of their schedule. Furthermore, uncertainty continues to linger as the K-12 principal's role and responsibilities are ever changing in response to political and societal factors.

The present study has shown that principals are proactive agents in their own socialization. They engage in several proactive behaviors aimed at reducing uncertainty and developing a positive social identity in order to achieve a sense of belonging by becoming an organizational insider. Principals seek information about their tasks and role primarily through monitoring and experimentation methods. However, they also engage in inquiry based social exchanges with coworkers in order to learn about the school culture and its inner workings.

Moreover, principals invest large amounts of effort into relationship building, particularly early on in their tenure. This individual socialization tactic is multi-faceted for principals as it allows them to grow a positive and collaborative culture, distribute their leadership responsibilities while building the capacity of key personnel, and establish a positive organizational identity. Thus enabling them to enact their action plan. Principals also engaged in feedback seeking behavior. They sought timely specific feedback from

supervisors as well as various forms of informal feedback. Informal feedback mechanisms included personal methods such as staff surveys and parent input, as well as non-personal forms such as attendance records and anecdotal data on school culture.

Another input found to influence the principal socialization process is the level of support received during the principal's tenure in the role. Principals who received positive support from supervisors, fellow coworkers, and school staff saw it as a major impetus to their adjustment to the role, whereas the administrators who reported receiving little support or even being sabotaged by supervisors or coworkers found it to be a major obstacle to their development. Additionally, whether or not the principal had a mentor impacted their socialization experience. The presence of a mentor was seen as a necessity by principals as they traversed the intricacies of the role. In most cases an informal mentor, meaning one not assigned through a formal district principal mentoring program, was identified as being most helpful. The principalship is a lonely position and support from district leadership as well as from mentors contributed to the positivity of the socialization experience. Moreover, the context in which the principal was engaged in the socialization process was also relevant. Organizational factors such as level of turnover in central office or whether an inside candidate was passed up in favor of an outsider were potentially stifling to the principal's socialization journey. However, in other cases school and community specific factors such as a death or other traumatizing event actually resulted in shortening the time it took for a principal to achieve insider status and develop a positive social identity.

Level of proactivity and the context of the socialization episode influenced the evolution of a principal's social identity. Principals also experienced a fair amount of identity conflict as their initial perceptions as well as self-identified role priorities were in contrast to

some degree with the day to day tasks and responsibilities of the job. Moreover, a principal's identity was seen in large part as an extension of their influence on the school culture through their leadership philosophy and vision of education. Principals also found themselves navigating several sub-identities as a result of the diversity and multi-faceted nature of their role. Furthermore, even though the principal socialization process involves large amounts of identity work in order to establish one's self as a school leader, principals also held on to aspects of their teacher selves and worked to merge them with their emerging administrator identity.

The school leaders socialization process resulted in the development of the following desired outcomes. As is the goal of any organizational socialization process, the principal strives to be seen as a full-fledged organizational insider belonging to the school community. However, at the same time they must improve the organizational culture they seek to be a part of by establishing themselves as a versatile leader, with a strong instructional vision and thorough understanding of the benefits of a collaborative leadership style.



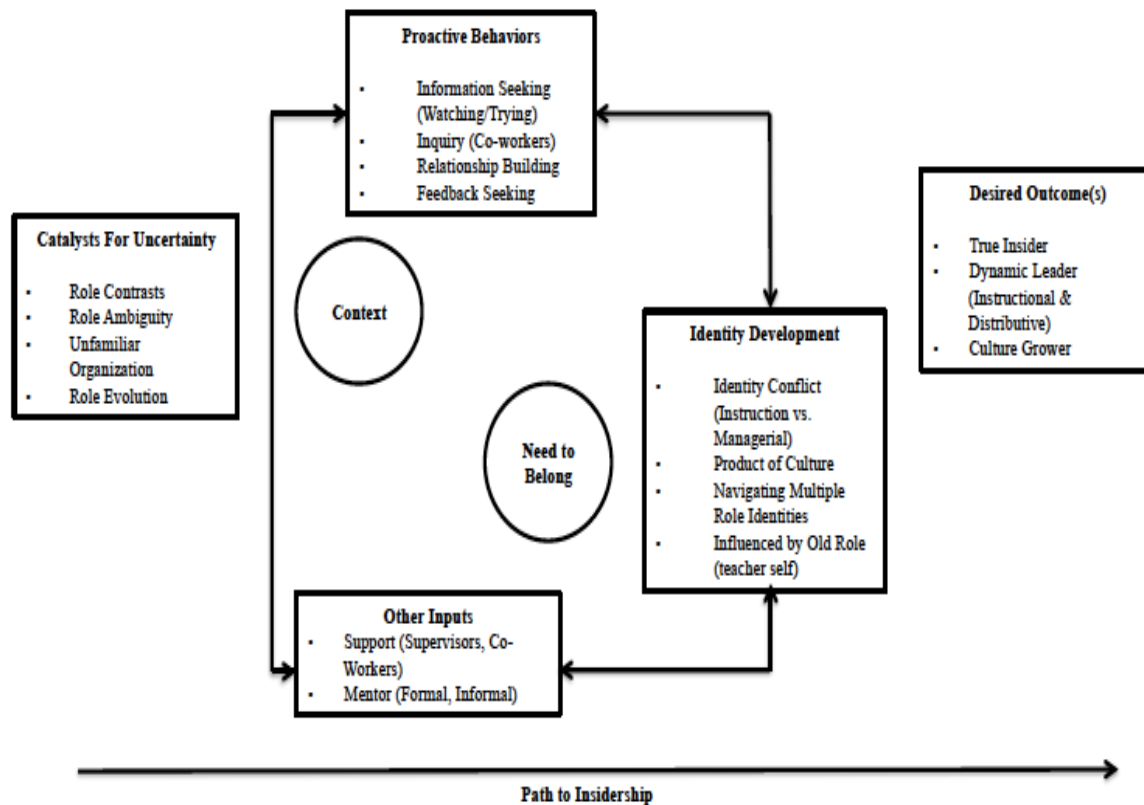


Figure 6: Conceptual Model of Principal Individual Socialization Process

The findings from this study provide district personnel with needed insight into the individual socialization process of school leaders. This should be useful to districts as they look for ways to support the overall adjustment of principals into the role and reduce the high amount of turnover related to the job (Briggs et al., 2013). Moreover, the present study provides empirical support for Chaoi's (2012) comprehensive four-theory framework for organizational socialization (The Need to Belong, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Social Identity Theory) and broadens its applicability to the leadership field.

## **Implications**

This study produced several relevant implications regarding the principal socialization process. For instance it is clear that in order for principals to reduce potential identity conflict and role ambiguity they must enact a distributive leadership style (Seashore-Louis, et al., 2010). The need for principals to work in a collaborative fashion is critical as it sets a strong cultural foundation while at the same time relieving the burden principals face in terms of the enormity of their role. This would allow principals to focus on instructional leadership leading to an increase in overall achievement.

Another implication of the study is that district leadership should consider setting up informal mentor networks for principals to take advantage of. This may be done through setting up opportunities for current principals to forge relationships with highly effective veteran or retired administrators. These should not be formal mentorships and should allow for the newer principal to choose with whom and how often they associate. Similarly, as recommended by Seashore-Louis, et al., (2010) district leadership should put mechanisms in place that allow principals to have more time to gain comfort in the role with their fellow school leaders. This could be done through focused colleague visits and small focus group meetings.

Furthermore, It is evident that principal training programs and internships need to give potential administrative candidates a more representative model of the modern principal's role. There is a clear disconnect between a budding principal's perceptions of the role and the actual reality of it. Moreover, the results of this study have made clear that the present day principal's role is ever-evolving as a result of the social and political climate. Principal training programs should ensure potential candidates are well versed in understanding the

principal's responsibilities regarding school safety as well as how the evolution of social media has impacted the responsibilities of the role.

Finally, districts need to understand that principals are extremely proactive in their own organizational socialization. Therefore, district leaders need to provide high levels of support for these proactive behaviors. Moreover, principal supervisors need to ensure they are providing principals with timely specific feedback as they work to establish a positive social identity.

### **Limitations**

This study utilized survey research in the first phase of data collection. Although the final quantitative sample of 227 was fairly large the response rate was low (Creswell, 2015). Two electronic questionnaires were sent to approximately 60,000 principals and 6,000 superintendents representing 42 states across the country. However, when one considers that all of those potential participants were randomly selected and received no incentive to complete the survey the low response rate becomes more comprehensible. A second limitation to this research was not all respondents completed both survey instruments. Of the 227 that completed the SIAQ 110 also completed the NLS. Finally, due to the anonymity of the survey the researcher was limited in selecting who could be included in the qualitative sample. As a result the qualitative sample was conveniently selected. Participants were interviewed if they self-selected themselves by indicating their interest at the end of the surveys, were currently serving as a K-12 school principal, and responded to follow-up queries by the researcher to schedule the interview.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Positive organizational socialization experiences have been linked to organizational commitment and increased performance (Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007). As the instructional and cultural leader of the school, the principal's socialization experience is of grave importance (Crowe, 2006). The present study shed light on the proactive behaviors K-12 principals utilize in the organizational socialization process as well as how this enables them to make sense of and develop a positive identity in the role. A conceptual model of the individual socialization process of the modern day principal was developed using Chaoi's (2012) never before utilized theoretical framework of the organizational socialization process.

However, continued research on the principal organization socialization process is necessary. Future research could build on the findings of the present study by examining whether a principal's information seeking and overall profile of proactive behaviors differs depending on how far they are in the socialization process (i.e. 3 months, 6 months, 12 months). Furthermore future research in this area might consider the relationship between a principal's information seeking behavior and overall learning. More specifically, there is a need to investigate the correlation between the domains a principal seeks the most information about (task, role, group, organization) and their perceived learning in those domains. Finally, there is a need for future research on organizational socialization to adopt the four-theory framework (uncertainty reduction theory, the need to belong, social exchange theory, and social identity theory) proposed by (Chaoi, 2012) and employed in this study in order to confirm or disconfirm its applicability to the organizational socialization of principals as well as in other contexts.

## **Summary**

This study utilized a sequential mixed methods design to investigate the organizational socialization experiences of modern K-12 principals. More particularly, the proactive behaviors of principals, in terms of their individual socialization, were explored within a comprehensive four-theory framework as the backdrop for organizational socialization. Findings revealed principals play an active role in their socialization, which is motivated by great amounts of uncertainty and a need to belong. They utilize multiple forms of proactive behaviors such as information seeking and inquiry, relationship building, and feedback seeking through engaging in social exchanges in an effort to fashion a positive social identity within the organization.

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## Appendix A Methodological Map

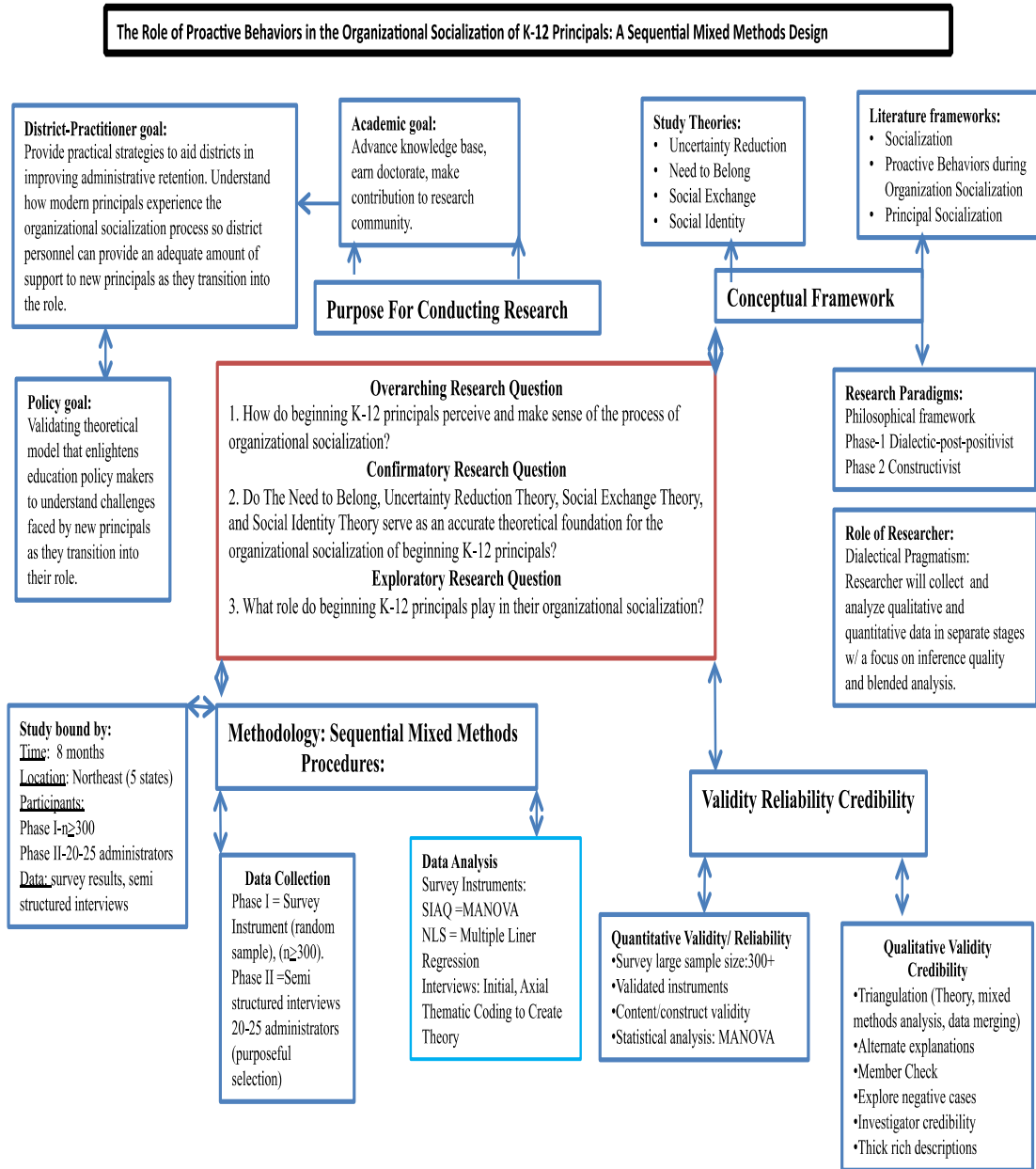


Figure 7. Concept Map. Adapted from “Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach” by J.Maxwell, 2013. p.5. Copyright 2013 by Sage.

## Appendix B Worldview Matrix

Worldview	Constructivism	Post-Positivist	Dialectic Pragmatism
<b>Ontology:</b> (Reality /what "exists" is exactly that which can be represented) What is the nature of reality in this Mixed Methods Research praxis?	Reality constructed through embracing multiple perspectives (subjectivist) What are the experiences of newly hired administrators? What role do they play in their socialization? Quotes and text will help to illustrate self-perceptions from multiple perspectives.	Singular reality. Closed ended survey results used to identify trends in the population as well as salient constructs. (objectivist). The researcher as outsider analyzes the quantitative data using descriptive and inferential statistics. Possible imperfection recognized.	Multiple realities: (Phase I ) Post-positivist-statistical analysis of quantitative results. (Phase II) Constructivist: Emergent themes result from combining and comparing qualitative interview data from groups of administrators. Phase I and II data triangulated to provide rich meaning to the results.
<b>Epistemology:</b> What is knowledge? Knowledge constructed using various sources of data. Analysis of data depends upon source and purpose, i.e. statistics and coding for themes that combined, compared and analyzed	Closeness: Researcher and administrators. Interviews conducted to elicit multiple perspectives of administrator experiences. Knowledge and relationships built over time. Knowledge cannot be independent of knower.	Researcher distances self from participants as a way to gain a representative and valid measure of responses to survey instrument. Intent is to remain "Impartial and objective." Meaning is independent of individual.	Etic (Outsider) during-Ph.I Emic (Partial insider view -Ph.II. Researcher & administrators co-create meaning and explanation to phenomenon under study. Quantitative strand used to inform qualitative strand increasing the credibility of the study's findings.
<b>Axiology:</b> What is the role of values in influencing the way the research is conducted.	Researcher and administrators recognize bias and negotiate their shared interpretations.	Researcher attempts to be unbiased and not introduce own values, prior experiences, or opinions about the phenomenon under study, but rather draws conclusions from the data gathered.	Multiple stances: Value post positivist objective (survey instrument, statistical analysis-Ph I) constructivist subjective (interviews-Ph II) perspectives integrated in the evaluation conclusions.
<b>Methodology:</b> How is the processes of research used.	<b>Inductive approach:</b> Participants engaged in the cyclic process of reviewing and clarifying themes/results and conclusions after interview and follow up sessions.	<b>Deductive approach:</b> Determine if a priori theories serve as adequate framework to for principal socialization process. Test and confirm prior theories and constructs on which survey is based.	<b>Mixed Approach:</b> Researcher collects and analyzes qualitative and quantitative data and blends both in the final stage of analysis to create a multi-layered in depth account of the phenomenon under study. (meta-inferences)

1

*Figure 8. Worldview Matrix. Adapted from "The worldview matrix as a strategy when designing mixed methods research," by T. W. Christ, 2013, International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches, p. 88 Copyright 2013 by eContent Management Pty Ltd.*

## Appendix C

### Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire

Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire  
(Adapted from Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992)

#### Welcome to My Survey

The purpose of this research project is to (a) explore the proactive role K-12 principals take in regards to their organizational socialization. (b) Propose a theoretical model of the organizational socialization of school principals. This is a research project being conducted by Thomas Nobili at the University of Bridgeport. You are invited to participate in this research project because you are K-12 public school principal.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

The procedure involves filling two online surveys using Survey Monkey electronic survey software that will take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete in total. The sole researcher conducting this study will be the only one who sees your responses. A space will be provided at the end of this survey to provide an email address if you would be willing to be re contacted to participate in a voluntary follow up semi-structured interview where you would be given additional consent information prior to your participation. The decision to provide an email contact is completely optional. If you choose not to take part in a follow up interview your survey responses will be completely anonymous as no identifiable information will be collected. If you choose to voluntarily provide an email address in order to be re contacted for an interview the researcher will keep a record of the email address attached to the survey data, which the researcher will store in a password-protected file. The sole researcher will be the only person who will have access to this identifiable information until data analysis is complete. At that point this information will be deleted. No other identifiable information will be collected. The survey questions will be about your role and experiences as a school principal.

To help protect your confidentiality, all survey responses and signed consent forms will be destroyed after data analysis is complete. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with University of Bridgeport representatives. Any academic publications associated with this project including the researcher's dissertation will not contain any information that could be used to identify the participants.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact [tnobili@my.bridgeport.edu](mailto:tnobili@my.bridgeport.edu). This research has been reviewed according to University of Bridgeport IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

**ELECTRONIC CONSENT:** Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

- you have read the above information
- you voluntarily agree to participate
- you are at least 21 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

1. Electronic Consent

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree

Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire  
(Adapted from Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992)

2. Is your current position your first experience as a school principal?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. How long have you been in your role as principal at your current school?

☐ 0-5 Years

☐ 6-10 Years

☐ 11-15 Years

☐ Over 15 Years

4. Did you work in the district in which you are now a principal prior to being offered the prinipalship?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. Were you previously a staff member at the school at which you are now a principal?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Socialization Information Acquisition Questionnaire  
(Adapted from Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992)

Below are some things you may have learned about during your time as principal at your current school. Below each feature is a list of sources which may have provided you with information and helped you learn about those features. The sources of information may be people (such as a supervisor), books (such as district policy handbooks), or techniques (such as observing others). Your task is to indicate how much you have learned about each of the following features from each of the information sources using the scale below. Select your response (1 through 5) next to the information sources below each feature. Be sure to select a number for each information source.

5= a great deal of information

4= a lot of information

3=some information

2=a little information

1=no information

Definition of Sources:

**Mentor**-Someone at an equivalent or higher level than you who has helped you by taking you "under their wing." They could have done so in a formal or informal capacity.

**Supervisor**-Your immediate supervisor or boss.

**Co-Worker**-A member of your work group or other employee at your level or lower.

**Watching**- Learning by observing how others do things.

**Trying**- Trial and error, or experimenting by trying different things.

**Manual**-Learning from a manual about policies, procedures, jobs, etc. or learning from formal orientation/training.

6. What the important tasks,duties, and assignments for my job are

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. The goals and objectives of the school/district

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-Worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. How to "fit in" the school

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. How to act and behave with fellow administrators and central office staff

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. How to get along with my co-workers

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



11. How to deal effectively with "red tape"

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. How much I can make up my own rules or ways of doing my job

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. What staff members within the school have status, are important, or are respected

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. My role in the mission of the district-how it "fits in"

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. When I can act alone and when I need approval

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Who has real power in the district

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. What the standard operating procedures for my job are

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. What the district's policies, procedures, and rules are

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. What my responsibilities are

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. What is expected of me on the job besides performing my tasks well

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. The priority of my various tasks and assignments

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. What the important norms and values of the district are

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

23. How co workers feel about the various aspects of my job

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. The special language or jargon used in the district

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. How much I can define or modify my tasks or duties

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

26. How to perform basic tasks or duties correctly

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

27. How to handle routine problems or difficulties for my job

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. The atmosphere of interpersonal relations within the school

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

29. Where (or who) to obtain important information about my job from

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

30. The ropes for getting ahead in the district

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

31. What the key legends, myths, and stories about the school/district are

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

32. How much authority I have to accomplish my job

	1	2	3	4	5
Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Co-worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

33. If you would be willing to participate in a follow-up semi structured interview, please provide an email address on the line below. The researcher will contact you via email to set up the interview and you will be given additional consent information prior to your voluntary participation in the interview.

Email Address

## Appendix D

### Newcomer Learning Scale

Newcomer Learning Scale (Adapted from Cooper-Thomas, in press)

#### 1. Welcome to My Survey

The purpose of this research project is to (a) explore the proactive role K-12 principals take in regards to their organizational socialization. (b) Propose a theoretical model of the organizational socialization of school principals. This is a research project being conducted by Thomas Nobili at the University of Bridgeport. You are invited to participate in this research project because you are K-12 public school principal.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

The procedure involves filling two online surveys using Survey Monkey electronic survey software that will take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete in total. The sole researcher conducting this study will be the only one who sees your responses. A space will be provided at the end of this survey to provide an email address if you would be willing to be recontacted to participate in a voluntary follow up semi-structured interview where you would be given additional consent information prior to your participation. The decision to provide an email contact is completely optional. If you choose not to take part in a follow up interview your survey responses will be completely anonymous as no identifiable information will be collected. If you choose to voluntarily provide an email address in order to be recontacted for an interview the researcher will keep a record of the email address attached to the survey data, which the researcher will store in a password-protected file. The sole researcher will be the only person who will have access to this identifiable information until data analysis is complete. At that point this information will be deleted. No other identifiable information will be collected. The survey questions will be about your role and experiences as a school principal.

To help protect your confidentiality, all survey responses and signed consent forms will be destroyed after data analysis is complete. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with University of Bridgeport representatives. Any academic publications associated with this project including the researcher's dissertation will not contain any information that could be used to identify the participants.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact [tnobili@my.bridgeport.edu](mailto:tnobili@my.bridgeport.edu). This research has been reviewed according to University of Bridgeport IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

**ELECTRONIC CONSENT:** Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

- you have ready the above information

- you voluntarily agree to participate
- you are at least 21 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

1. Electronic Consent

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree



Newcomer Learning Scale (Adapted from Cooper-Thomas, in press)

2.

Please use the following scale when evaluating each statement below.

7-strongly agree

6-agree

5-slightly agree

4-neither agree nor disagree

3-slightly disagree

2-disagree

1-strongly disagree

2. I understand how to perform the tasks that make up my job.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. I understand which job tasks and priorities take priority.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. I know what my supervisor considers a s good performance

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. I know what it takes to do well.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. I understand what the duties of my job entail

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Other colleagues have helped me on the job in various ways.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. My coworkers are usually willing to offer their assistance or advice.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Most of the staff have accepted me as a member of this school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. My relationships with other staff in this school are very good.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. I believe most of my coworkers like me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. I am familiar with the history of this school/district.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. I know the internal structure of this district.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. I have learned how things really work in this district.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. I am familiar with the unwritten rules of how things are done in this district.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. I understand this district's objectives and goals.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. I know who the most influential people are in the school/ district.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. If you would be willing to participate in a follow-up semi structured interview, please provide an email address on the line below. The researcher will contact you via email to set up the interview and you will be given additional consent information prior to your voluntary participation in the interview.

Email Address

## **Appendix E**

### **Interview Protocol**

- 1) Tell me about the career path that has led you to this position.
  - a) What influenced you along this path?
- 2) What did you expect your job to be like before you started to work?
  - a) Were your expectations confirmed? Disconfirmed? In what ways?
- 3) Talk about your transition into this role.
  - a) How has your teaching tenure impacted your work as a principal?
- 4) Has your role as a principal changed since you first undertook the position? In what ways?
- 5) What is the most important thing you learned since assuming this role?
  - a) How has it impacted you?
- 6) What type of information was most helpful as you were starting out in the role?
- 7) Discuss the steps/actions you took in order to facilitate your adjustment to this role.
- 8) In what ways if any have you changed the role since assuming the position?
- 9) What changes have you made to the school since taking over the principalship?
- 10) How would you describe your transition into the role in terms of staff relationships?
  - a) How would you describe your relationship with staff now?
  - b) Why do you think it changed/stayed the same?
- 11) Who has been most helpful to you in terms of transitioning into your current role?
  - a) In what ways?
- 12) Who have the most critical people in the organization been in supporting your growth as a principal?
  - a) Why?
- 13) What was the most difficult part about being a principal when you first started? (skip if discussed in Q3)
- 14) What is the most difficult part of the job now?
- 15) Thinking back to when you first became a principal, what were your thoughts about school leadership?
  - a) What was the role of a school leader?
  - b) What was a leader like?

- 16) How would you categorize the priorities of your position?
- 17) How do you know if you are doing a good job?
- 18) How do you feel your supervisors would describe you as an employee?
  - a) Fellow administrators as a colleague?
  - b) School staff as a principal/leader?
- 19) What information/advice would you give to a newcomer to the principalship that you wish you had known?
- 20) What influences (people, events) helped shape your vision of the role of principal?
- 21) How would you describe what it is you do your role/job to someone not in the field of education?
- 22) How would you describe your leadership style?
- 23) How would staff describe your leadership style?
- 24) What surprises/hurdles have you encountered during the time in the role
  - a) How have you coped/dealt with them?
- 25) Discuss the process of shedding the identity of any old roles and establishing identity in current role?
  - a. Was it difficult to overcome the identity of your predecessor?
- 26) Can you describe the circumstances/events surrounding the first time you felt like a true member/insider of the school community?

*\*Portions of this protocol have been adapted from Bengtson, Zepeda and Parylo, 2016 & Feldman, 1976*

## Appendix F

Table 8  
*States Sampled*

<b>Principals</b>	<b>Superintendents</b>
Alabama	Alabama
Arkansas	Alaska
California	Arkansas
Colorado	Connecticut
Idaho	Delaware
Iowa	Florida
Kansas	Georgia
Louisiana	Iowa
Maine	Massachusetts
Michigan	Michigan
Minnesota	Minnesota
Mississippi	Mississippi
Missouri	Montana
Montana	Nevada
Nebraska	New Hampshire
New Hampshire	New Jersey
New Jersey	New Mexico
New Mexico	New York
New York	North Carolina
North Carolina	Oklahoma
North Dakota	Rhode Island

Ohio	Texas
Oklahoma	Utah
Oregon	Washington
Rhode Island	West Virginia
South Carolina	Wyoming
Tennessee	
Texas	
Vermont	
Virginia	
District of Columbia	
Washington	
Wisconsin	
Wyoming	

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**Appendix G**  
**Survey Email to Principals**

Hello,

I am conducting research through the University of Bridgeport for a national study on principal adjustment. If you are a public school principal please consider taking a few moments to complete the two very short questionnaires that I have provided links to below. All results are anonymous.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BCRPR77>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BRZ2JMT>

The anticipated findings from this study have the potential to be useful to district personnel looking for ways to support principals as they adjust to and make sense of their new role, as well as for new administrators looking for ways to help ensure a smooth transition into the principalship.

I thank you in advance for your time and hope you will support this research by providing some information on your experiences as a school leader.

Respectfully,

Thomas Nobili  
University of Bridgeport



**Appendix H:**  
**Survey Email to Superintendents**

Hello,

I am conducting research through the University of Bridgeport for a national study on principal adjustment. I am respectfully asking that you forward this message to all school administrators in your district. I am hoping they will consider taking a few moments to complete the two very short questionnaires that I have provided links to below. All results are anonymous.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BCRPR77>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BRZ2JMT>

The anticipated findings from this study have the potential to be useful to district personnel looking for ways to support principals as they adjust to and make sense of their new role, as well as for new administrators looking for ways to help ensure a smooth transition into the principalship.

Thank you in advance for your time and that of your staff for supporting this research.

Respectfully,

Thomas Nobili  
University of Bridgeport

## **Appendix I**

### **Initial Interview Email**

Greetings,

Thank you for completing the survey portion of this research and for agreeing to participate in the interview phase of this study on principal adjustment. I appreciate your willingness to give up your time and discuss your experience as a school leader.

I anticipate the interview to take between 45-60 minutes; however, it may run a bit longer or shorter depending on the specific information you choose to provide. It is my hope to conduct all interviews between the months of May-July. At your convenience, I am asking that you provide me with your preferred availability (dates and times) during those months so I can put together an interview schedule. All interviews will be done via phone.

Please note that you will not be directly identified during the interview tapings. You will be assigned a pseudonym prior to the interview taking place in order to protect your anonymity. Attached you will find a consent form specifically designed for the interview phase of the research which will provide additional details on the process. Please read it carefully and feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns. I am asking that please sign and scan back the signature section (page 4) of the consent form to me via email along with your interview availability and the best phone number to reach you on.

Thank you again for being willing to volunteer your time to contribute to this research and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Respectfully,

Thomas Nobili  
University of Bridgeport

## **Appendix J**

### **Interview Consent Form**

**Title of research study:** The socialization experiences of internally and externally promoted administrators during the succession process.

**Investigator:** *Thomas Nobili*

We invite you to take part in a research study because you are currently employed as a principal in a K-12 public school and have been in your present position for five years or less. Additionally, you have been asked to participate in this voluntary interview as a follow up to the surveys you completed on this project.

#### **What you should know about a research study**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- You volunteer to be in a research study.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

#### **Who can I talk to?**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team at [\*tnobili@my.bridgeport.edu\*](mailto:tnobili@my.bridgeport.edu).

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board. You may talk to the IRB Co-Chair at (203) 576-4141 or [irb@bridgeport.edu](mailto:irb@bridgeport.edu) about any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

#### **What are you doing this research?**

This research is being conducted in order to (a) explore the proactive role K-12 principals take in regard to their organizational socialization. (b) Propose a theoretical model of the organizational socialization of school principals.

#### ***5-How long will the research last?***

We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately 1-3 interview sessions each lasting between 45 minutes-2 hours.

#### **6-How many people will be studied?**

We expect about 30-40 people will be in this research study. We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately 1-3 interview sessions each lasting between 45 minutes-2 hours.

#### **7 - What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?**

If you choose to be part of this research study you will be contacted via email (obtained through voluntarily providing your email address at the end of the surveys you completed at an earlier point in the study) to participate in an initial open-ended interview focusing on your socialization experiences during your succession into your current role. The focus will be on your unique individual socialization experiences. Information from your survey responses may be associated with your interview during data analysis. All tapings and transcriptions will use an assigned pseudonym as a referent. Neither the audio files nor transcriptions of any of the interviews will contain any directly identifiable information. The original digital recordings will be deleted from the digital recorder after verbatim transcriptions are finished and you have a chance to review them in order to ensure their accuracy, as well to make sure that you are comfortable with the degree of anonymity the transcripts provide. All transcriptions and audio files will be stored in password protected folders to which only the researcher has access. You may be asked via email to participate in 1-2 follow up interviews if the researcher decides to ask additional questions or clarify some of your earlier responses. Thus the researcher will keep a record of the pseudonym attached to each interviewee in a password-protected file. The sole researcher will be the only person who will have access to this identifiable information until data analysis is complete. At that point this information will be deleted. Pseudonyms will be exclusively used during taping and on all transcripts. Interviews will take place via phone or Skype unless you and the researcher agree to an in person interview at a mutually agreeable location.

#### **8- What happens if I say no, I do not want to be in this research?**

You may decide not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you.

#### **9- What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?**

If you agree to take part in the research now you may stop at any time and it will not be held against you. If you should withdraw from the study before its completion all of your digitally recorded files and transcripts as well as survey data linked to your email address will be immediately destroyed and none of your data will be used in the final research report.

#### **10- Will being in this study help me any way?**

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include helping to advance the socialization field as well as potentially improving the organizational socialization experiences of future principals.

### ***11-What happens to the information you collect?***

Efforts will be made to limit your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. All data will be stored in a password protected format. To help protect your confidentiality, all interview and survey data will be destroyed once data analysis is complete. Furthermore, any record matching survey responses to an email address or interviewee to a pseudonym will also be destroyed after data analysis is complete. All signed informed consent forms will also be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization. Furthermore, the results of the study will be part of the researcher's dissertation and may be published in academic journals or presented at academic conferences. Any publications resulting from this project including the researcher's dissertation will not include information that could be used to identify the participants.

### **12-Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?**

This study does include a possible risk of loss of anonymity, which could lead to a possible perceived threat of job security. However, the researcher is attempting to minimize this risk through the stringent adherence to the procedure described above.

### ***13-Can I be removed from the research without my OK?***

The person in charge of the research study or the sponsor can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include: The sponsor can end the research study early. We will tell you about any new information that may affect your health, welfare, or choice to stay in the research.

**Signature Block for Capable Adult: Long Form**

Your signature below documents your permission to take part in this research

**DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE →**

April 18, 2019

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person obtaining consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

April 19, 2018

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person obtaining consent

Form Date